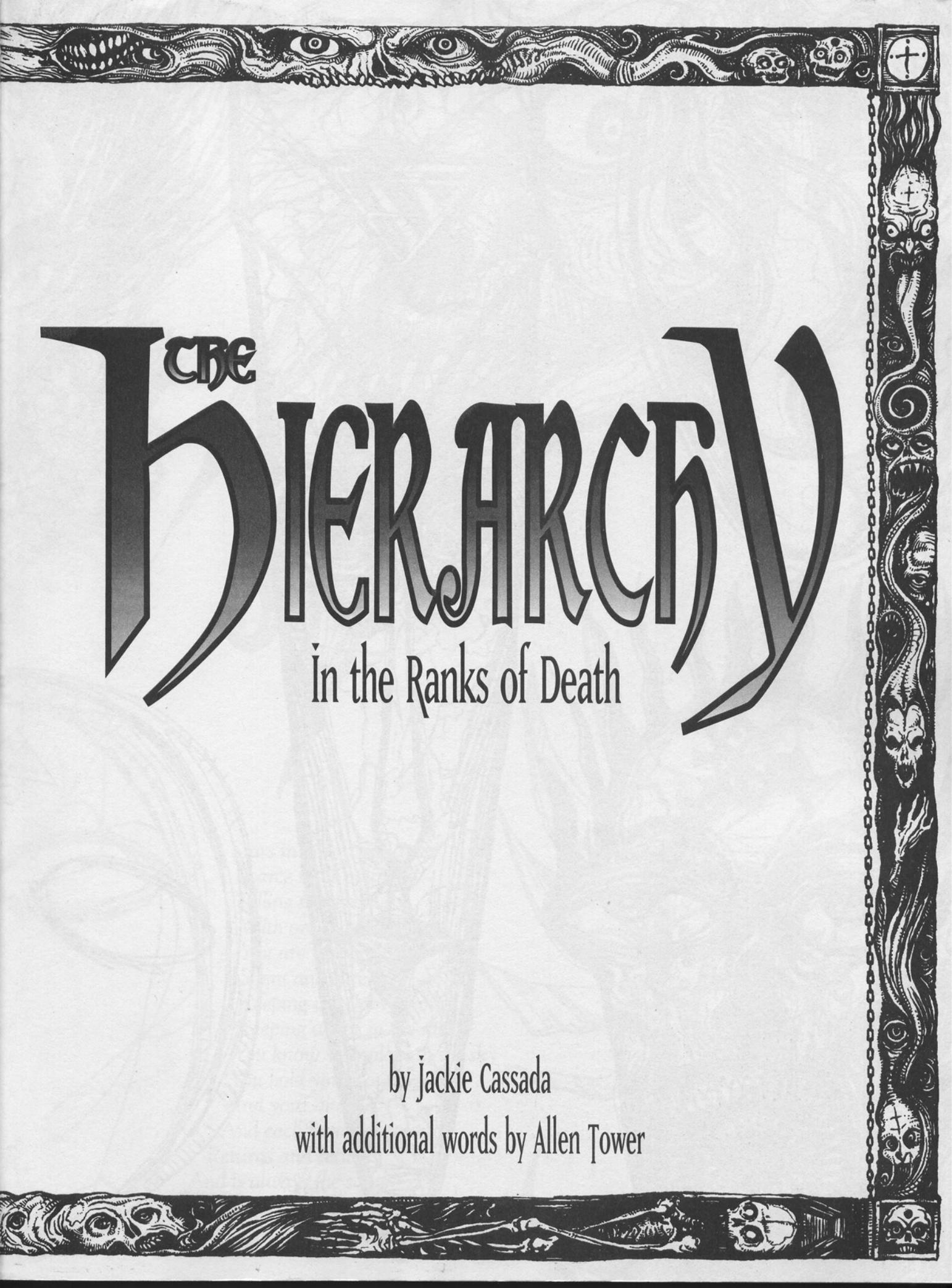


the HIERARCHY



A Sourcebook for
Wraith: The Oblivion™



THE HIERARCHY

In the Ranks of Death

by Jackie Cassada
with additional words by Allen Tower





Stars in your multitudes
Scarce to be counted
Filling the darkness
With order and light
You are the sentinels
Silent and sure
Keeping watch in the night
Keeping watch in the night
You know your place in the sky
You hold your course
And your aim
And each in your season
Returns and returns
And is always the same...
— Herbert Kretzmer, "Stars,"
Les Misérables

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In memory of my father, who taught me that there were always at least two, and usually more, sides to everything and who always looked for the truth concealed within the truths.



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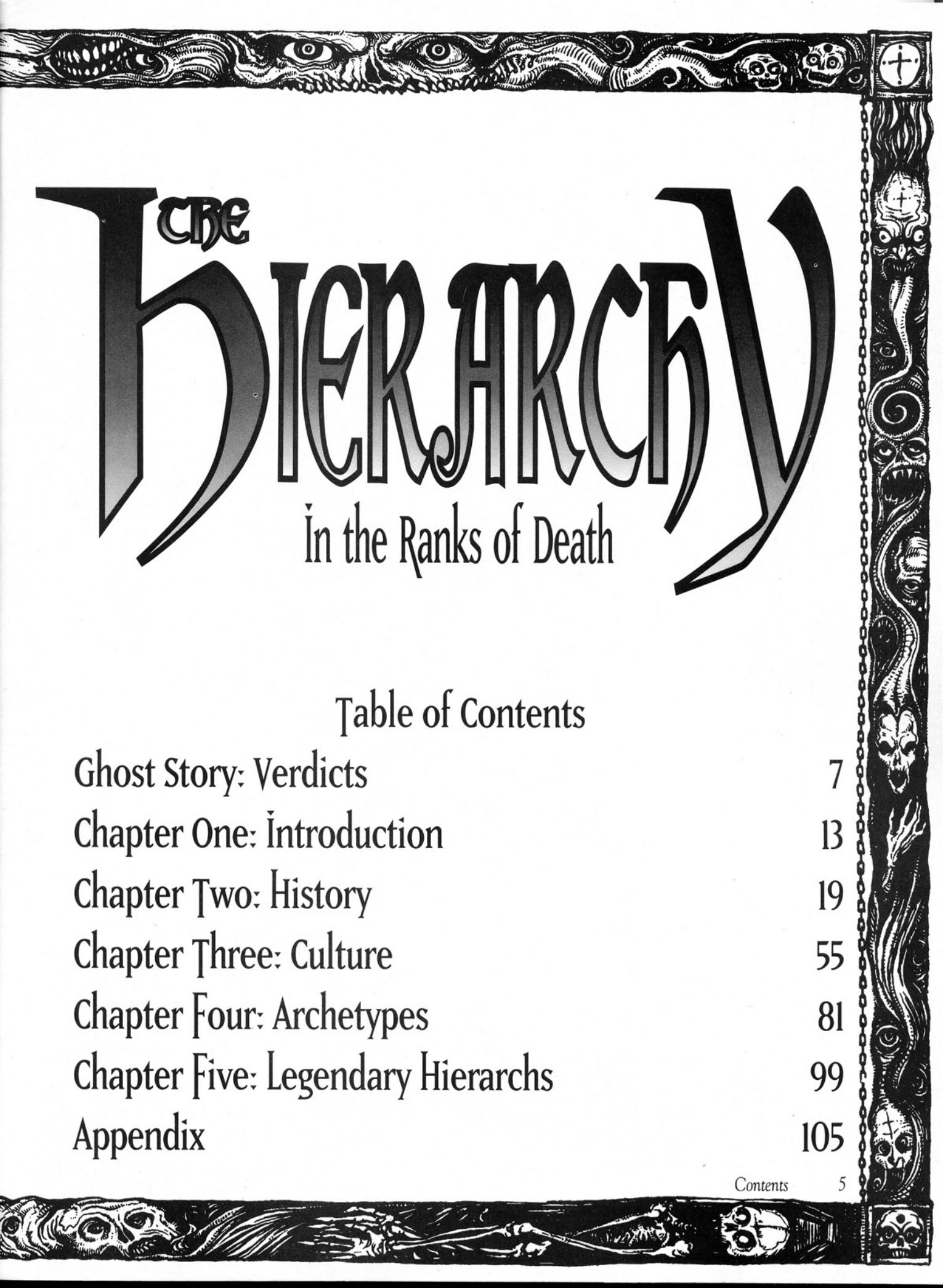
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The Hierarchy

In the Ranks of Death

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Ghost Story: "Verdicts"

A man is what he fights for.
— from Citizen X



don't know how long they kept me in darkness, bound by my own chains. It was my own fault, I suppose, going off by myself in violation of every bit of training I ever had. Still, I thought I heard a call for help from one of my Cohort, and I wasn't about to stick around and wait for backup. So, of course, I blundered right into their trap.

Going solo was my first mistake. Surrendering to the motley gang of Renegades who lay in wait for me was my second. I didn't see that I had a choice, though. There were just too many of them. There was no way my one sword could stand against their six or seven assorted swords, knives and clubs. I dropped my weapon and raised my hands. Standard procedure. I half-expected them to simply use me as a hostage for their safe passage out of the Necropolis. What I didn't expect was that they'd take me with them all the way through the Tempest to their base camp.

Sometime during the trip, one of them thought to use my own set of manacles on me. Then they blindfolded me. The chains functioned as they were intended, making it nearly impossible for me to sense where I was going, and the blindfold completed the job. When we finally stopped moving, they shoved me inside some sort of building — most likely their Haunt — and pushed me down some stairs. They ripped the blindfold off, but left the manacles and added the leg chains that went with them.

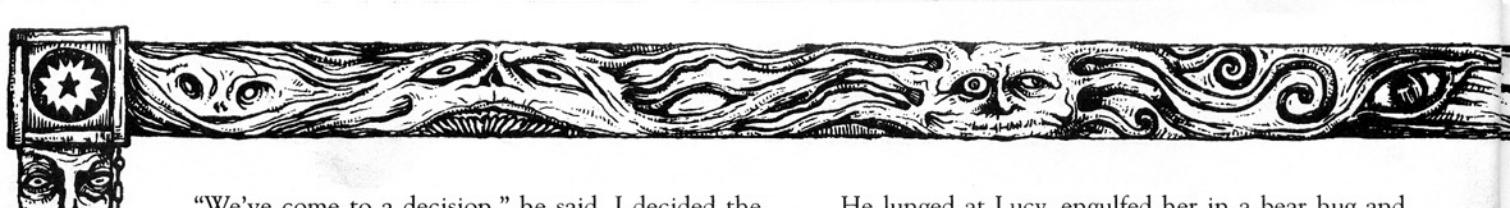
"Welcome to Hell," one of them said smugly. Then they shut the door on me and left me in the dark. I tried to keep track of the time, mainly to give myself something to do. After a couple of hours, a pair of them came in and pushed me around some.

"How does it feel to be a thrall, Mr. Legionnaire?" The voice was a woman's, this time. I decided to forego a response. If it didn't get any rougher, I was certain I could tough it out. It got rougher. When it got too rough, I started screaming. There was no harm in it, I figured. I didn't have to worry about embarrassing myself in front of my troops. They feasted on my pain for awhile, and then they left me again. I tried to go back to marking time, but my Shadow had other ideas.

Arguing with your Shadow when you're hampered by Stygian chains is not the most relaxing way to while away the hours. I finally won the argument, but I had no idea how much time had passed in the meantime. It could have been a few minutes, or hours, or even longer.

They repeated the process a few more times — the taunts, the beatings, the feeding on my emotions. I had just about decided that this was their plan — to have their own private thrall to play with. I got to know my Shadow real well.

Then it changed. The door to my make-shift prison opened and they all trooped in. I counted six pairs of foot-steps. They beamed a bright light in my eyes, which made it hard for me to see them, but I welcomed the change from the utter darkness that had gone before. I discovered that if I looked only at the fringes of the light, I could just make out their forms. Four of my captors were men, one of whom was a very big man. The other two were women, one small and one medium. The small woman stood near the back, leaning against the wall. I figured she was probably their leader. The big man stood closest to me. He was their muscle man. The man holding the light had rings through several parts of his face; I could see them glint whenever he moved. One of the other men spoke, the one who originally "welcomed" me to their Haunt.



"We've come to a decision," he said. I decided the smugness was a permanent feature of his vocal apparatus. "You've been charged with crimes against the people of the Necropolis of Locksburg. You will be tried by the people's court...."

"That's us," the medium woman said. She was the one who had called me a thrall. I wondered if she and the Welcome Man were a pair.

"Shut up, Lucy," he said. "Let me do this." That told me two things. They were a pair, and the woman's name was Lucy.

"No more names," said the small woman in the back. She was definitely their leader.

"You'll be given the opportunity to defend yourself," he continued. "Just like in a real Hierarchy court of law." He emphasized the word law, nearly drowning it in all the contempt he could muster. "Do you have anything to say for yourself before we begin?"

I thought about it for a long time, all of ten seconds or so, before I responded.

"You have no authority to try me," I said, my voice hoarse from lack of use. "I refuse to cooperate with this travesty of justice."

A couple of them snickered. Muscle Man shoved me backward, and I got tangled up in the leg chains and went down hard. "You've got no say in this," he snarled. He was right, I thought as I labored to stand up.

"Help him up," a different voice said. The man who had been silent up until now moved forward to stand between me and the light. I could see his face clearly; its hard lines gave him a desiccated look — except for the eyes, which burned with conviction. He grabbed the length of chain that joined my hands and pulled. Seeing that, Muscle Man got his hands on my shoulders and pushed me back onto my feet. Burning Eyes glared at me.

"My name is Conners." His voice was quiet and flat, like a stagnant pool. "I don't care who knows it." The small woman in the back sighed. Trouble in the ranks, I thought. A power struggle over the leadership of the gang. I was collecting quite a bit of information about them; I didn't think they had nearly as much from me. "You're going to be tried, whether you like it or not. If you won't defend yourself, I'll have to do it for you." He actually sounded serious. "You might want to think about that between now and the trial."

"Let's just do him," Lucy said. This time her voice was whiny and petulant. "This isn't any fun anymore. Let's just do him and get it over with." She started edging toward me, one hand moving as if to draw a weapon. Muscle Man blocked her path.

"She's lost it, Claire... I mean, Chief," he said. "We gotta get her out of here."

He lunged at Lucy, engulfed her in a bear hug and wrestled her to the door.

"Everybody upstairs, now!" Claire — I had a name for her now — barked out. The others jostled past me. Pierced Face pointed the light away, and I finally got a look at him — then wished I hadn't. Conners was the last one out of the room. He closed and locked the door behind him, and I was left in darkness again. I could hear them make their way upstairs, and for a while the sounds of scuffling as Lucy worked things out with her Shadow occupied my attention.

I spent a lot of time thinking about the trial, and what I would do. My Shadow was quiet, maybe lost in thought like me. I didn't expect more than a kangaroo court with the verdict a foregone conclusion. They as much as told me that. I had two choices. I could play along with their farce and try to defend myself honestly, knowing beforehand that I would lose, or I could continue refusing to acknowledge their authority. I would still lose, but they wouldn't have the satisfaction of pretending to themselves that they had given me a fair trial. I decided to tough it out. The old silence routine had its merits, at least as far as personal dignity went. I didn't have a lot of that left, so every little bit I could scrape up would be helpful.

I wondered if they would enumerate my "crimes against the people," or if it was even me they were trying. I endeavored to give honest consideration to what I had done recently. I was a Centurion, a patrol leader. I had been one for years, and had no desire to aim any higher. Locksburg was small, as Necropoli go, and most of what I did consisted of patrolling the streets and giving directions.

Occasionally a transport train bound for Stygia would stop at the old depot, abandoned in the Skinlands, to pick up any thralls we'd collected. Sometimes we had a few, the odd troublemaker or wayward soul who came stumbling into town with the look of Oblivion in his eyes. We clapped chains on them and put them in a holding shed on the depot grounds to wait for the next train. We used them for labor to give them something to do between trains.

My thoughts started to drift. Once or twice I tried to make it to one of my Fetters, but I couldn't override the effects of the chains. I was nailed in place. My Shadow woke up about then and presented me with a brilliant plan, only it involved summoning up a few Spectres and throwing myself and all my captors into Oblivion. It certainly was tempting, but I declined as gracefully as I could. I think I slept for a time.

They made enough noise when they came back to wake the dead. I had time to scramble to my feet before they opened the door. They brought two lights with them

this time, and hung them on opposite walls of the tiny room. I could see that I was definitely in the cellar of a small house. There were scorch marks on the walls, so I could guess readily enough how the house came to be in the Shadowlands. I wondered if it had been home to one of the group.

They arranged themselves around the room. They had brought some furniture with them, a small table and three chairs, which they set up near the wall opposite the door. Claire took a seat behind the table. Lucy and Pierced Face flanked her, completing my triumvirate of judges. The Welcome Man stood near the table, barely able to contain his smugness. He was the prosecution. The Muscle Man took up a position behind me, with his back against the door. Conners stood between me and the judges' table. My defense. He looked back over his shoulder at me and cocked an eyebrow as if inviting me to say something. I ignored him. He shrugged and turned away from me again.

I could see them clearly now. All six were fairly young. Lucy and Pierced Face were probably still in their teens when they died. Claire could have been in her late twenties, but I pegged the other three — Conners, the Welcome Man, and Muscle Man — for very early twenties. From their dress, I could pinpoint the dates of their deaths to within a few years.

Pierced Face was the easiest. With his shaved head and multiple face rings, he must have been here for only a few years. I wondered if he'd died from blood poisoning. Claire, with her washed-out, downplayed attractiveness and her proletarian clothes, I tagged as a radical from the Vietnam era. Probably a college activist, maybe even a professional agitator. Muscle Man, with his buzz cut, rolled up T-shirt and dirty jeans, looked like a farm-boy from the 1950s — a tough farm boy. Lucy was Gothic, through and through. Even when she was alive, I sensed that she tried her hardest to look dead. And succeeded pretty damn well. The Welcome Man wore a leather jacket with gang colors on the back and a pair of ripped Levis. His slicked-back hair made him look like an imitation greaser, instead of a real one, so I mentally slotted him in the 1970s "grease" revival era. Conners was the toughest to pigeon-hole. His shoulder-length hair would have been daring in the '60s, and too short in the '70s. He wore an over-sized army jacket over a button-down shirt and dark trousers. I finally shoved him into the '80s, partly because I couldn't think of any decade more appropriate and partly because things were starting to happen around me.

Pierced Face pounded on the table with his fist. "Let the prisoner step forward," he called out, then spoiled the effect with a snicker. This was my cue. I deliberately ignored it, and remained standing right where I was.

"Hey, pus-face, that means you!" Pierced Face sounded angry this time. He looked past me toward the door. "George, you're the court bouncer! Get him up here!"

George, I thought. I'll stick with Muscle Man. About that time, George-Muscle Man lifted me bodily and carried me forward until I was about four feet from the table. Then he put me down, hard. So much for dignity. He lumbered back to his post.

"This peoples' court is now convened," Claire said, her voice clear and resonant with authority. "Do you wish to defend yourself for your crimes?" she asked.

I stared at my feet.

"Answer the question," she commanded. I almost responded to the tone of her voice, but caught myself just in time.

"I'll speak for the prisoner," Conners said, moving to stand beside me.

"Fine," snapped Claire. "Do you wish to make a defense?" she asked.

"What are the charges?" Conners asked. He didn't look at me as he spoke.

The Welcome Man stepped to the front of the table and stood facing me. "You stand accused of the following crimes: first, that you and your kind falsely claim jurisdiction over the free citizens of the Shadowlands; second, that you've kidnapped innocent people and sold them to Stygia as slaves; third, that you represent a fascist, outmoded regime that has no right to dictate to anyone how they should act and what they should think; fourth, that you use torture and intimidation to bully people into accepting your authority; fifth, that..." he broke off and turned to the table. "I can't remember the fifth charge. Are four enough?"

Claire and Lucy nodded in tandem. Pierced Face snickered, "What about buggery? And being an asshole? There's charge number five." Claire stabbed him into silence with a look.

My accuser turned back to me. I continued to stare at the floor. "You've heard the charges," he said. "How do you plead?"

"Well?" Conners jabbed me with an elbow, trying to get my attention. I gave it to him, turning my head to look, not at the panel of judges, but at the young man who claimed to represent me in a trial I couldn't hope to win. I wanted to hear what he would say without any prompting.

"The court needs an answer," Claire said impatiently.

"Let's make this as simple as possible, then," said Conners. "Due to the lack of evidence to the contrary, my client pleads guilty to all charges."

"In that case," Claire began, "the sentence of the court is..."



And that's when I lost it. It was not my Shadow, the dark, festering part of my being that constantly provoked me to recklessness and suicidal behavior, that was responsible for my next actions. I just lost it.

"You don't know the first thing about justice," I heard myself say, helpless to maintain my voiceless denial of what was going on around me.

"Well, well, he does have something to say, after all," Conners mumbled, backing up to give me the floor.

Claire had other ideas, however. She stood up, managing to loom over me in spite of her diminutive size. "The sentence of the court is death by disorporation," she said.

"Awesome," Lucy said, "let's do it." Pierced Face giggled nervously.

I heard Muscle Man stir behind me, and tensed. Still standing, Claire held up her hand, palm out, and the room got very quiet.

"The prisoner still has the right to address the court," she said smoothly, giving me the barest hint of a smile. "You can plead for a reduction in the sentence, if you wish."

The way she stressed the word "plead" suddenly made it all come together. She wasn't concerned with even the motions of a trial, nor did she intend to impose the stated penalty. I doubted that anyone in the room even knew how to disorporate me. The worst they could do was hurt me a lot, over and over and over again. And that's exactly what they wanted to do, only they wanted me to beg them to do it. Well, I wouldn't beg, but I damn well would set the record straight. I threw my shoulders back as far as they would go, and stared at my judges.

"To begin with," I said, "you don't know the first thing at all about what the Hierarchy in Locksbury, or anywhere else for that matter, stands for." Pierced Face made a rude noise. "Shut up, you pimply-faced weasel," I said. That got a smile from Lucy, despite her apparent eagerness to "do me."

"Let him speak," Claire said.

"I'll try to refute the charges in order," I continued, as if there had been no interruption. "The Hierarchy doesn't claim to hold jurisdiction in the Shadowlands; it does so, in fact. If it didn't, what do you think would happen to all the Necropoli, to places like this — wherever this is — where groups like you have carved out a hole in the Tempest to hide out in? The Legions that protect — not occupy, protect — the Shadowlands are all that stand between you and the things that live in the Tempest. Have any of you fought Spectres before? Or Deliriums? Or Nephwracks? Or Shades? Have you ever seen them run screaming through the streets of a city, snatching your "free citizens" and dragging them into the nearest Nihil? If you have, then you know why the Hierarchy stays here. If you haven't, then we've done our job."



I heard the door behind me open and close, quietly, but I was on a roll. I had their attention, at least for awhile, and I intended to keep it until they shut me up.

"We don't kidnap souls and sell them to Stygia, either," I said. "We claim them, sure, because if we don't, they'll just wander around until they're snatched into the Tempest and shunted off into the Void by something nastier than we could ever be. Most of them don't want to go, so we chain them up to quiet them down long enough to send them on their way." I thought carefully for a moment, because this was something that I still had trouble with, even after years with the Legions. It was precisely because of this that I avoided anything that would lead to a promotion. Still, I could understand the reasons for what I was about to say; I just didn't like it very much. "Not everyone who goes to Stygia gets written off," I said. "If they have Fetters — and a lot of them do — they wind up in the Legions, like me."

"And if they don't, you smash them down and turn them into swords and pocket change," Lucy said. Claire held a hand up to silence her. "Keep going," she said, a little too amiably.

"Yes," I said, hoping they could hear my reluctance, but there was no point in lying to them. "Some of them do get sent to the forges. Those are the weak ones, the ones who would only have slipped away into the Void. This way, they're at least productive." I saw Conners shake his head disbelievingly. I decided I needed to convince him, if no one else, that my arguments held at least some merit. "Look," I said, turning to face him, "in the Skinlands, what happens to losers, to people who just can't cut it in the world?"

I waited a few seconds. Finally, Pierced Face took the bait. "They don't cart them off to some factory and throw them in the furnace," he said.

"At least, not since the 1940s," Conners said mildly. So he knew his Skinlands history. I'd try not to let him down.

"Those weren't losers," I said, "and those victims were alive at the time. No one can justify that. What happens here isn't the same thing. A whole different set of rules apply here, and they apply because they have to. The souls who end up as part of those weapons of yours, the coins in your pockets, these chains," I held up my wrists as Exhibit A, "are all souls who never lived, really lived, in the first place. They had no Fetters, no longings, nothing to keep them from falling away into utter annihilation. In the Skinlands, they would have gone on welfare, or preyed on others, or died slowly of starvation and neglect. They would have sunk to the bottom of the barrel no matter where they were. Only here, where Oblivion grows stronger with every soul it takes, we can't afford to let them stagnate."

The bottom of the barrel opens into a bottomless pit here in the Underworld. That's why we find other uses for the ones who can't be saved."

It felt like a lame finish, but it was the best I could do. Even I couldn't defend everything the Hierarchy condoned.

"Go on to the next charge," Claire said. "This is fascinating."

"Where's George?" The Welcome Man asked suddenly, looking past me to the door. I turned around and saw that Muscle Man was no longer in sight.

"He must have gotten bored," said Pierced Face. "Just like me, only he was closer to the door."

"That's enough, Peter," said Lucy. "Sorry," she added quickly, barely disguising her false apology. "Peter" gave her a scathing look that didn't quite succeed.

"That's Richard," he said, pointing to the Welcome Man. "Now you know all our names," he crowed.

I nodded. "I'm Daniel," I said. "And I won't even pretend to justify law and order to a group who just doesn't understand the necessity for some sort of stability for..."

And that's when the cavalry burst through the door. A dozen Legionnaires armed with Stygian blades surrounded the five startled Renegades. They put up some resistance, but the fight was over almost as soon as it started. I was still trying to make sense of the whole thing when Muscle Man — George — walked up to me and put a hand on my shoulder.

"Give me the password for the chains, Centurion," he said.

"What?" I found my brain suddenly full of fog and spiderwebs.

"The password, so I can unlock the chains," he repeated, very slowly.

I gave it to him. He repeated the words, and the chains slipped from my wrists and ankles. I almost collapsed from the rush of sensation that coursed through me. I looked around. The troops had slapped manacles on their prisoners. Peter was starting to giggle hysterically, muttering "This isn't happening, this isn't happening," over and over. The others were more or less in control of themselves, but they all looked stunned and one or two looked angry. Claire seemed dwarfed by the thick iron chains. She was staring at George. I decided to do the same.

George had dropped the dumb jock pose. Now he looked more like a Marine. He grinned, and slapped me on the back.

"George Vaughan, Centurion of the Legions of the Grim, on special assignment," he said. "Well done, Centurion."

"I don't understand," I said. "What did I do? And how did you know..."

"It took me years to set this up," he said. "This group has been giving us trouble all over the area, but we've never been able to catch them in a charge we could actually make stick until you turned up." Suddenly, I recognized the voice I'd heard calling for help just before I was ambushed. "Now we have them but good," he continued, unaware of the shock that I felt but obviously didn't betray. "Kidnapping a member of the Legions with the intention of destroying him is grounds for arrest and trial. A real trial, this time," he added, "before a duly appointed court of Stygian law."

"Then what?" I asked. "What'll happen to them if they're found guilty?"

George frowned. "If? Be serious, man. You heard them order your disorporation. So did I. That's a capital crime."

"That was a bluff," I said, suddenly afraid for all of them, even Pierced Face.

He sighed. "You will, of course, return to Stygia with me to give testimony," he said. He turned to his waiting soldiers. "Move them out," he ordered.

"Wait," I said hurriedly. I pointed at Conners. "He tried to help me. Can't you..."

"Later, Centurion," George said. He detained me while the Legionnaires escorted the prisoners out of the room. As the door closed behind them, I got a good look at George's face. He seemed just a little smaller, just a little wearier.

"I've spent nearly five years with this group," he said quietly. "I know them, and I know which ones might eventually be recruited into the Legions, and which ones are hopeless. Conners has potential," he said. "So does Claire. As for the rest..." he finished with a shrug. "Let's go home. There's a train waiting at the depot."

I took one last look around the room before I followed him out the door, up the stairs, and out into freedom. We had one less band of Renegades to worry about, I was no longer a captive, and I could return to my regular routine — after a short jaunt to Stygia for the trial, of course. I should have felt elated with our — well, George's — victory. But somehow, I just felt tired.

"Pick it up there, Centurion," George called out from a few steps in front of me. "All in a day's work."



Introduction: The Powers That Be

Men are not governed by justice, but by law or persuasion. When they refuse to be governed by law or persuasion. They have to be governed by force or fraud, or both.

— George Bernard Shaw, *Misalliance*

Lhe system. The establishment. The authorities. The powers that be. Law and order. The government. Management. Since its inception, the Hierarchy that rules Stygia and the Shadowlands has fostered an image of strength and invulnerability, power and omniscience. The Legions of the Deathlords and the regime they serve see themselves as all that stands between the society of the Restless Dead and Oblivion.

Who are these bastions of wraithly power, and what are their motivations? As its name implies, the Hierarchy supports a society of classes and ranks. The weakest wraiths are relegated to thralldom or used as raw materials to create items and oboli in the forges of Stygia. Most citizens content themselves with existences devoted to diligent work, hoping to prove themselves to their superiors and earn promotions. The colonies of the Shadowlands — the Necropoli — began as imperial outposts to facilitate the processing of souls, many of whom were destined for transmutation into goods. Although most Necropoli enjoy at least some degree of autonomy, the traffic in souls continues under the supervision of the Hierarchy's Legions. A draconian system of justice guarantees severe punishments for infractions of the rules, and it is the Hierarchy that both makes the rules and enforces the penalties.

And yet, for all this, the Hierarchy guards its own, and by stemming Oblivion's inky tides, it guards even its enemies. Racism and sexism are virtually unknown within its structural makeup; any wraith with the strength to resist Oblivion has an equal chance for advancement. Even a few thralls have distinguished themselves enough to earn promotions, to full Hierarchy citizenship and beyond. In an Underworld full of Renegade and Heretic squabbling and terrorism, only the Hierarchy is organized enough to show a united front, regardless of any internal strife. It represents law in a sea of chaos, stability in a world of flux. To many of its citizens, it is a society superior to the world they left behind, and is thus precisely what they need.

Seen from the outside, or from the very bottom rungs of society, the Hierarchy appears to be a cold, brutal, self-perpetuating system, interested only in amassing power and wealth for itself at the expense of weaker members of society. Its critics are legion, ranging from Renegades who seek its overthrow for any number of alleged corruptions to Heretics who claim it impedes their particular search for Transcendence. Even wraiths who support the Hierarchy fear invoking the wrath of the Legions.

How true are these perceptions? Is the governing body of Stygia and the Shadowlands truly a monstrous entity second only to Oblivion in the threat it represents, or does the Hierarchy suffer from a neglected public image? Who

are the mysterious Deathlords whose decisions control the destiny of the Underworld? What is it like to be a loyal member of a vast "empire of the dead," to serve in the Deathlords' Legions, to walk the streets of Stygia or to represent the forces of law and order in the colonies of the Shadowlands?

How to Use This Book

This book provides a wealth of information on the Hierarchy. In addition to allowing Storytellers to portray "the establishment" of the Underworld convincingly, the pages that follow are meant to provide details and motivations sufficient to enable players to create characters who can function successfully within the system. In some chronicles, the Hierarchy will serve as the "enemy," and the Storyteller will stress its restrictive and punitive nature. In others, the structures that make up the government of Stygia will simply provide the framework from which a story evolves. Still other chronicles will feature the Hierarchy as a flawed but ultimately worthy institution which deserves the loyalty it demands.

Although it is referred to as a singular entity, the Hierarchy is actually an intricate network of interconnected power bases, each with its own guiding principles and its own secret agendas. Stygian policy is actually implemented quite differently from Necropolis to Necropolis. Whatever aspect the Hierarchy assumes, whatever mask its members present to the world of the Restless Dead, the talents and desires of both Storyteller and player will be necessary to bring it to life. The raw material is here, waiting to be shaped by the forges of the imagination.

You're in the Hierarchy now.

The Faces Behind the Mask

No one theme or mood can accurately portray the complexities found within the Hierarchy's Byzantine structure. However, there are several motifs that offer unique insights into its inner workings. These are the masks through which the Hierarchy looks out upon the world of the dead; these are the mirrors which reflect the faces of those who stand on the outside looking in.

Responsibility

The burden of efficiently organizing and maintaining the society of the Restless Dead falls heavily upon the shoulders of Hierarchy wraiths. Bringing order to chaos is one thing; keeping it orderly is another. The self-indulgent Heretic Cults and the sneering Renegade Gangs owe their license to exist to the presence of a stable government in the Shadowlands. Were it not for the sacrifice and discipline of the thousands of wraiths who submit themselves to the Hierarchy's authority and control, the lands beyond the Shroud would soon be lost to lawlessness and anarchy. Eventually the inchoate fog of the Tempest would destroy all that has been so carefully built.

Peacekeeping

Like any empire (and regardless of what it calls itself, Stygia is an empire), there is always a need to preserve order within the territories claimed by the Mother Country. Renegade and Heretic terrorists can be just as merciless and fanatical as their Skinland brethren, and many innocent wraiths are caught in their lashing out for freedom. The Shadowlands are tenuously linked to Stygia by the network of byroads through the Tempest, but safe travel is not always assured. Since the Fifth Great Maelstrom, the Stygian outposts and Necropoli in the Shadowlands have become nearly autonomous political units. Still, commerce between the Necropoli and Stygia goes on, and the governing bodies of the Necropoli pay at least nominal homage to the Underworld's "capital." Hierarchy troops are largely responsible for keeping the peace — both in Stygia and in the Shadowlands. The Restless Dead are just that — restless.

Oblivion Fighters

Despite its reputation for bureaucratic regimentation and moral stagnation, the Hierarchy offers its share of excitement and danger for active members of its Legions. When all is said and done, the Legions of Stygia and the Shadowlands are still the front-line fighters in the ongoing struggle against Oblivion and the Spectres who serve it. Some Hierarchy Legions dedicate themselves solely to this endless war, believing that any other battle — whether against Renegades, Heretics, or some other enemy — is meaningless and only distracts them from the real threat that faces the Underworld.

Opportunity Seekers

The Hierarchy provides a coherent framework for political and "material" advancement in wraithly society. Ambitious and determined individuals can traverse the Byzantine politics of the Underworld and gain power and wealth for themselves and their followers. Anacreons do not die into their position, one Stygian adage goes, and the stories of lowly Lemures who fought their way through the ranks to gain some coveted position in Stygia or in the Shadowlands fuel the desires of many wraiths who have decided that working within the system and learning to use it to their advantage is more satisfying than some distant hope of Transcendence.

Keepers of the Dream

Since its founding by Charon during the time when Roman rule was at its peak, there have always been some wraiths who saw the Hierarchy as the best means for finding purpose and meaning to existence in the Underworld. For these wraiths, the goals espoused by Charon (or, more accurately, their interpretation of those goals) have instilled in them an almost fanatical loyalty to the regime. Charon's disappearance has only confirmed in them their need to preserve what they see as his legacy.

Heroes and Villains

No one knows what it's like

To be the bad man

To be the sad man

Behind blue eyes

No one knows what it's like

To be hated

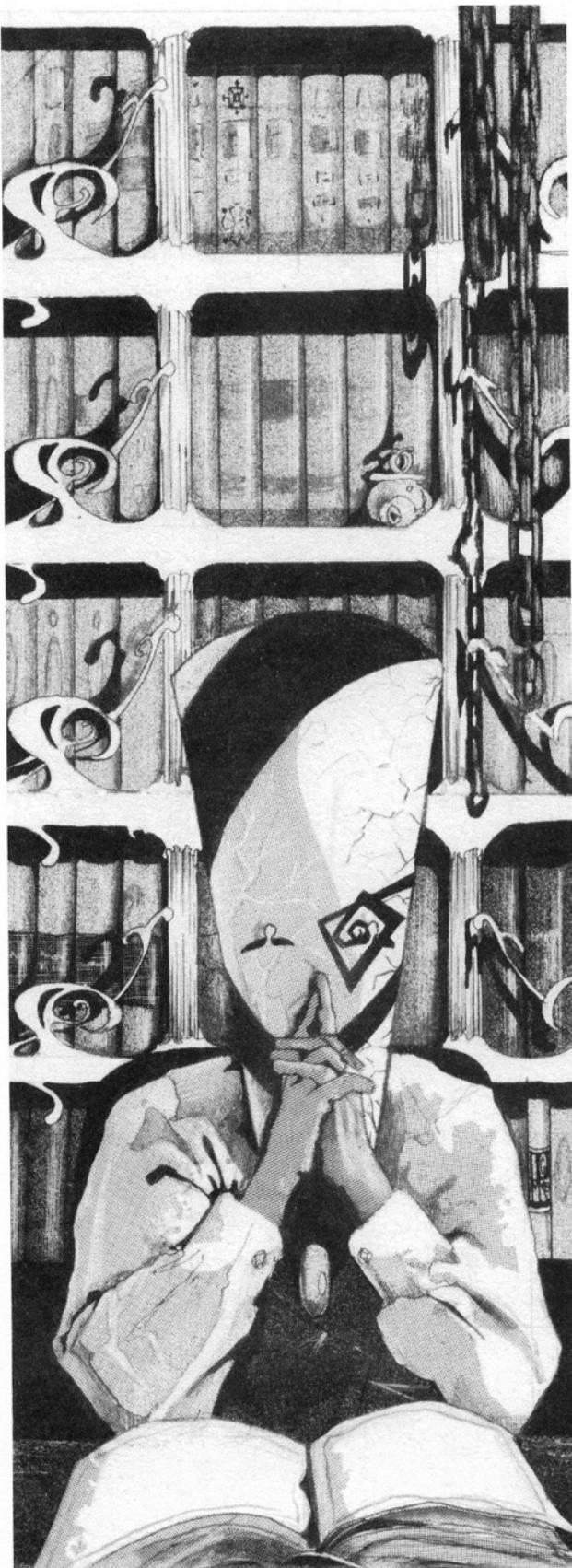
To be fated

To telling only lies

— The Who, "Behind Blue Eyes"



Depending on your point of view, Hierarchy wraiths are either the good guys or the bad guys. On the one hand, the Hierarchy stands for law and order, tradition and stability. On the other hand, it represents imperialism, slavery and submission. The kindly "beat cop" and the bludgeoning riot policeman, the idealistic civil servant and the corrupt politician, the guardian of individual rights and the self-serving profiteer all have a place within the framework of the Underworld's bureaucracy. Just as the Hierarchy represents many things to many people, so too do the individuals who make up this Underworld power.





Just as in most governments and organizations, a multitude of sympathetic characters exist within the framework of the Hierarchy. Many of the wraiths who have accepted the Deathlords' rule (and before them, Charon's) are men and women of honor and integrity. Outsiders often condemn all Hierarchy wraiths out of habit. But they fail to recognize the valor of the Legionnaire who regularly throws herself at invading Spectres, or the compassion of the Clerk who recommends the Enfants in her care for the Legions rather than thralldom.

The fact of the matter is that the wraiths who serve the Hierarchy believe that it really is the Underworld's best (and only) defense against Oblivion. They could be right — the Renegades and Heretics certainly do not serve as examples of wraiths fighting with one heart and one mind. Many Hierarchy wraiths are simply realists: not blind to the faults of their government, but convinced that it is the best system around.

Of course, some real villains exist within the Hierarchy. The motives and rationalizations for their actions are complex and, when viewed from within, often quite reasonable. After all, no one sees him or herself as "evil." Most, in fact, consider themselves heroes whose actions are justified and whose enemies simply fail to understand the real picture. Legionnaires who hunt down and pursue enemies of the state do so because they see themselves as the forces of law and order, not because they are "the bad guys." Anacreons who implement some of the Hierarchy's most heinous policies do so with the conviction that their actions are necessary.

Like heroes, villains come in many shapes and forms. Outright villains usually act out of the desire for personal power, from a deluded sense of superiority, or because they consider their actions noble and heroic. Opportunists see a way to profit from the Hierarchy and do so as often as possible; frequently they respond to bribes, making them easier to deal with than villains with strong convictions. Reluctant villains perpetuate the system because they fear reprisals if they refuse to carry out orders; these often make the most implacable foes because they face personal retaliation if they waver in their duties. Some few villains simply enjoy exercising power or inflicting pain. These are the stereotypical egomaniacs that give the Hierarchy a bad name.

Using the Hierarchy in a Chronicle

Most Wraith chronicles, whether they take place in the Byzantine, claustrophobic environs of Stygia or the necropolitan sprawl of the Shadowlands, will include a Hierarchy presence of some kind. In order to make this presence seem real for the players, the Storyteller should take care to portray any Hierarchy personalities her characters may meet as fully developed individuals. She should not only determine the motivations of the Hierarchy members of the Necropolis in which her chronicle takes place, but also endow those individuals with unique mannerisms and detailed appearances.

If the players' characters are Hierarchy wraiths, the Storyteller will stress the Hierarchy's merits and achievements; it is, after all, the faction they support. Its goals are their goals, and its enemies are theirs as well. This doesn't mean that the flaws within the Hierarchy need to be whitewashed, but they do have to be justified, often as "unavoidable." Most people are familiar enough with the fallibility of governments in the real world and can understand how it is possible to support a system that is far from perfect.

If the players choose to play Renegades or Heretics, their view of the Hierarchy will be very different. The Storyteller must emphasize the oppressive and sometimes brutal nature of the Hierarchy to her players, while retaining her own objectivity in order to avoid the trap of portraying her antagonists as caricatures. The contrast between a series of harsh brushes with Hierarchy Legions and an encounter with a sympathetic Centurion who does the Circle a favor can go a long way toward building an image of the Hierarchy as a totalitarian government in which some good may still occasionally be found.

Lexicon



djustor: Administrative title given to wraiths who supervise groups of clerks within the Hierarchy and who serve on the staff of higher-ranking officials.

Annals of the Dead: A massive collection of records stored in the Great Library of Stygia which chronicles the history of the Hierarchy.

Chancellor: Administrative assistant to the Anacreon of a Citadel; the civilian equivalent of an Overlord.

Clerk: The title given to the lowest ranks of the Hierarchy's administrative wing; roughly equivalent to the position of Legionnaire.

Imprimatur: A little-known appendix to the Soulbook of the Legions (see below), this volume's title is Latin for "let it be printed;" in the Skinlands this was the mark of official approval for publication by the Church of Rome. In the Underworld, it is a court order of perpetual imprisonment.

Inspector: The title given to those who administrate a given area around a Citadel; the civilian equivalent of a Marshal.

Itinera Mortis: The name originally given to the network of roads connecting Stygia with the Shadowlands (literally, the roads of death).

Legate: A Legionnaire, usually a Centurion or higher rank, who serves as a special emissary or messenger.

Magister: A high-ranking official in charge of a specialized department or office within the Hierarchy. The Magister of the Library oversees the archives within the Great Library of Stygia and serves as the Keeper of the Soulbook.

Magisterium Veritatis: The Council of Inquisitors formed by Charon to root out Heretics in Stygia (literally the Magistry of Truth).

Minister: The title given to wraiths who supervise the Inspectors within the perimeter areas of a Citadel; the civilian equivalent of a Regent.

Soulbook of the Legions: A Stygian Artifact, this encyclopedic collection houses the captive and preserved memories of Hierarchy wraiths who have witnessed significant events in Stygian history.



Ex Libris: The History of the Hierarchy

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

All these are the beginning of sorrows.

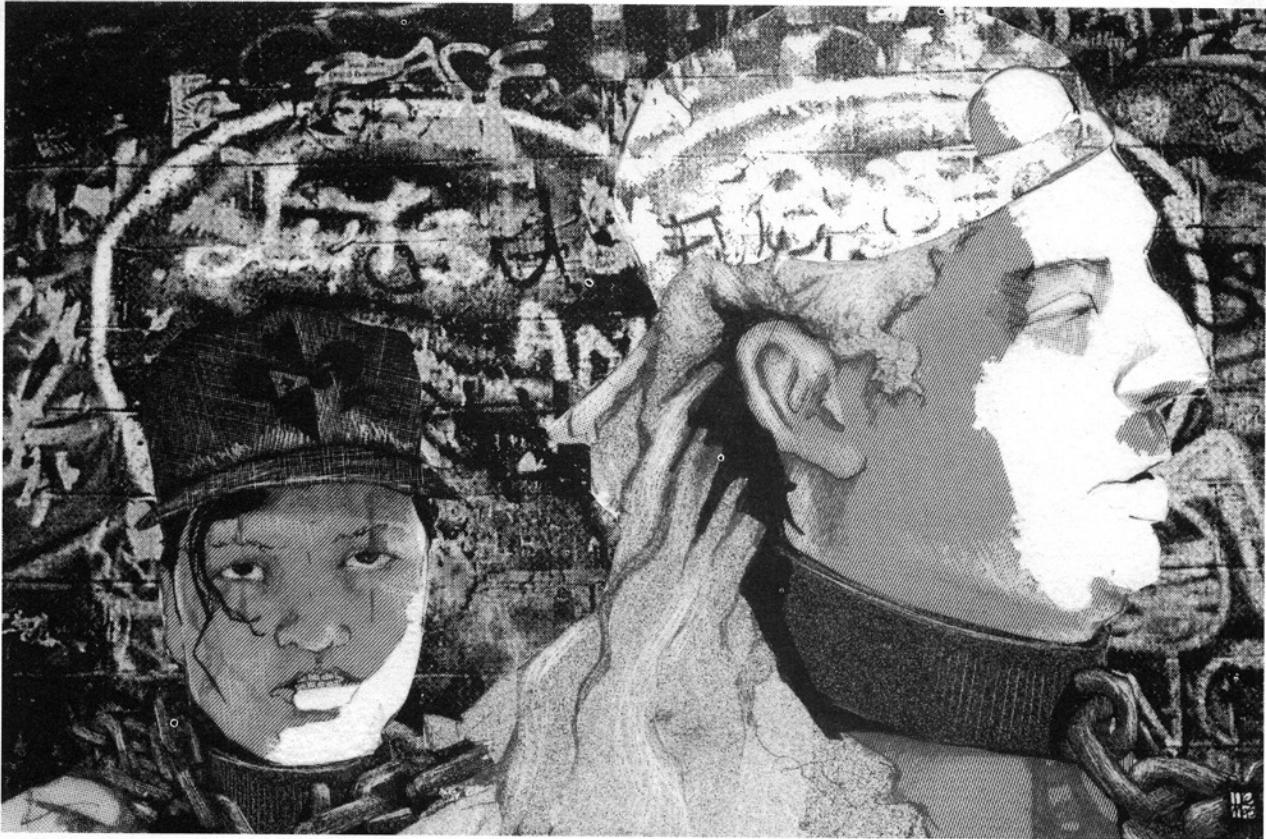
— The Gospel according to St. Matthew, 24:6-8

Hhe history of the Hierarchy is a chronicle that mirrors the history of the Skinlands, but where the world of the living focuses on the evolution of human life, the world beyond the Shroud concerns itself with the evolution of human death. The currents of war, plague, famine, and disaster that interrupt the course of humanity's advancing civilization are the meat and drink of the Underworld's growth and survival. But just as no mirror ever provides more than a close approximation of the reflected object, in the same fashion Stygian history differs significantly from the world so darkly imaged through the Shroud's twisted glass.

The Doors of Truth



Welcome to the Great Library of Stygia. Here you will find a complete record of the history of the Underworld, from its earliest beginnings in the darkness before time to the ever-changing courses of the present. The fact that you have presented yourself at this center of learning and knowledge reveals to me that you are a seeker after truth. The question is, whose truth do you seek? The Hierarchy's truth? We have that, aplenty. The



Annals of the Dead hold the most frequently consulted documents concerning the rise of our illustrious Stygian government. Peruse them at your leisure. If you seek for other groups' truths, there are some additional writings which may catch your interest. Here in the Library, we collect all accounts of significant historical events, regardless of the sentiments they express or the veracity of their contents. Our job is not to judge, but to preserve.

Unlike most who enter these halls, you have been granted free rein of all the materials contained within these walls. That's very impressive. I hope the trust vested in you is well-placed. I leave your choice of reading matter to your discretion. My duties call me elsewhere, so I will allow you to explore where you will. I have left the keys to the vault where you can reach them, if your quest takes you that far. Do not let the cries these keys make as you turn them in the lock disconcert you. After a time, you grow accustomed to it. May you find all you seek.

— Hypatia, Librarian, Great Library of Stygia

Out of Chaos, Order



In the beginning, the Restless Dead wandered aimlessly through the mists of the Darkness, hovering like the shades they were on the edge of life, yearning for what they could no longer have. Those who strayed too far in their wanderings fell prey to the Spectres, and fed the dark void of Oblivion, helpless to stand against its growing might. Then Charon emerged and brought his shining vision to the world of the dead. The society of wraiths took form under his hands, establishing a bulwark of strength and stability against the onslaught of the armies of Oblivion. Where there was nothing but chaos, he imposed an orderly society based on structure. This social system became known as the Hierarchy, for it relied on a tightly knit chain of command and provided a framework in which each member of Stygian society knew her place and from which she could make her most effective contribution to the greater good.

— from *The Annals of the Dead, being an Official Record of the Deeds and Acta of the Legions of Charon*



That's the story as most people hear it told, but it fails to tell the whole truth. Some believe that the Hierarchy in its present form only began in the Middle Ages, with the adoption of the trappings of feudalism. For a real, insider's look into the history of the Hierarchy, there's only one source, and that's the *Soulbook* — if you're lucky enough to get a look at it.

— Silas Fort, Centurion of the Penitent Legions, Stygian Watch

Ancient History

In the time before time, the borders between the worlds of the living and the dead were not so clearly drawn. From time to time, the spirits of the dead would cross over into the mortal world to act as advisors, as agents of revenge, or simply to glean some faint pleasure from contact with the realm of flesh. Likewise, mortals would attempt (often successfully) the more difficult journey to the Underworld. The travails of Orpheus, Persephone, Gilgamesh and other ancient heroes in the world of shades have since made their way into the annals of legend, but their experiences were not isolated.

Within the Underworld itself, chaos reigned during the earliest times. Only with the arrival of Charon, foretold by the Lady of Fate, did the beginnings of order arise. Charon's explorations of the Underworld's great riverway, his discovery of the Sunless Sea and the Isle of Sorrows, his encounters with the forces of Oblivion that raged unchecked across the length and breadth of the Underworld — these things led him to the realization that an equal force was necessary to provide safety for the souls who wandered through the darkness. Through the efforts of Charon and his Ferrymen, the Restless Dead built their first society on the shores of the Sunless Sea. From there, those who could make the journey to the Far Shores did so. The others remained behind, and it was their need which called Charon to an even greater responsibility: that of maintaining a haven which could withstand and push back the tide of Oblivion. Thus, from one man's dream, the Hierarchy was born.

The earliest underpinnings of the Hierarchy begin with the establishment of the Republic of Stygia, modeled after the most powerful government then existing in the Skinlands. The influx of souls during the period after the formation of the Republic provided Charon and his Senators (the future Deathlords) with a steady stream of innovations. The frequency of wars during the period of Roman expansion insured a plentiful supply of labor and "raw" materials for the construction of the fabulous buildings of Stygia. The Persian, Peloponnesian, Samnite, Punic, Macedonian and other wars boosted the Underworld's population and provided Charon with experienced troops to send against the armies of Oblivion.

But wars were not the only source of souls. Unsophisticated medical practices, lack of sanitation, and plagues such as the one which swept through the Roman empire in the latter half of the second century contributed multitudes of wraiths whose deaths were caused by disease or infection. Natural disasters such as the eruption of Vesuvius which destroyed the city of Pompeii in 79 A.D. and the great flood which submerged Ys in Brittany in 440 A.D. played their part in bringing large groups of wraiths beyond the Shroud. Many practices common to the world during the centuries before the fall of the Roman Empire, such as gladiatorial combats, enforced suicides, and public or group executions resulted in the arrival of wraiths with highly specialized talents.

Although Charon's original reasons for organizing the wraith population of Stygia centered around fighting Oblivion and providing an orderly means for controlling the passage of souls across the Sunless Sea to the Far Shores, his fledgling Hierarchy of Senators and their followers gleaned as much information as they could from the never-ending influx of souls. Many wraiths who were influential as leaders, politicians, philosophers, heroes or artists during their lifetime were encouraged to bide for a time in Stygia to share their expertise and talents with Charon's Senate. Wraiths of the stature of Cicero, Hannibal, and Aspasia often elected to remain within the Shadowlands, either as a result of their own reluctance to set off for a journey of uncertain destination, or for the promise of an honored place in the society of the Underworld.

— *Annals of the Dead*

The Pax Romana

There are those who hold that during the period known in the Skinlands as the "Pax Romana," Stygian civilization reached its pinnacle of achievement. Although this sentiment is most often voiced by the nostalgic old guard who surround themselves with the relics of a by-gone age, it fails to take into account the obvious growth in wealth and might in the centuries that followed. Nevertheless, the achievements of the Hierarchy (though we had yet to be so named) stand in potent testimonial to the bravery and vision of those who took upon themselves the burden of leadership and wrested order from the formlessness which surrounded them.

The preservation of art and culture, particularly those works lost to the world of the living, began during this period in history. The construction of buildings in Stygia employed the aesthetics of classical architecture, and are still considered to be some of the most beautiful in the Underworld.

While Rome ruled the world, bringing the benefits of its conquered civilizations to the furthest reaches of the known world, Charon gave orders for the creation of road-

The Soulbook of the Legions

No one is certain who created this priceless treasure of Stygia. Some attribute its origins to Charon's desire to keep an accurate accounting of the passage of history in the Underworld. Others claim various historians as the conceptualizers of this record of the activities of the Legions. Almost everyone agrees that only the genius of Nhudri, the Great Artificer, could devise the means for capturing and preserving intact the memories of wraiths, who witnessed the evolution of the Hierarchy from a group of citizen-soldiers into a massive, self-perpetuating society.

The *Soulbook of the Legions* is a massive multi-volume collection of tomes made (as is virtually everything else in the Underworld that isn't a relic) of the stuff of souls. Each page of the tome consists of an individual wraith whose memories and beliefs form the words upon that page. One of the highest honors accorded to a member of the Hierarchy is to be chosen for inclusion in the *Soulbook*. Every wraith who has sacrificed her personal existence to the cause of historical accuracy does so willingly, or so it is said. But there are other voices who hint that not all the "living pages" were so eager to join the ranks of posterity. The archivists who tend the Great Library in which this Artifact is kept hint of baleful moanings and lamentations emanating from the spines of the volumes, as trapped wraiths bemoan their fate as captive storytellers, forever caught up in the memories designated worthy of preservation.

Some rumors also state that some wraiths "selected" to become part of the *Soulbook* were chosen not as a reward, but as a punishment for being unfortunate enough to witness some of the Hierarchy's darker moments. These hapless wraiths — many of them once powerful adversaries of the Stygian powers — are bound into a single volume, referred to as the *Imprimatur*. This volume is housed in a locked vault within the catacombs beneath the Great Library of Stygia.

Access to the *Soulbook of the Legions* is carefully controlled. Only the Deathlords and the Magister of the Great Library have unrestricted access. Others who wish to consult the *Soulbook* must receive permission from one of the Deathlords (usually granted through a high-ranking household member) or from the Magister of the Library herself. The *Soulbook* contains valuable first-hand information on various periods of Underworld history, recording successful tactics, significant events, and many other details useful to historians, administrators, and military strategists within the Hierarchy.

To consult the *Soulbook*, a wraith from the Shadowlands must make the arduous pilgrimage to Stygia, and then prepare to wait while her request is processed. For members of the Legions within Stygia, the wait is only a little shorter. The only way to gain instant access to the *Soulbook* is through the use of one of the rare "soulhelms," Artifacts which combine the powers of Argos, Fatalism, Inhabit, and Lifeweb to enable its user to mentally reference the individual volumes. Only a few of these items were ever forged, for the Deathlords soon realized the potential dangers they posed and issued an order forbidding further production. The Artificers who possessed the knowledge of their construction were summoned to a special session of the Deathlords' Council and subsequently disappeared (some say into the pages of the *Imprimatur*). Since then, the existing soulhelms have become the personal property of the Deathlords.

On rare occasions, temporary usage of a soulhelm is granted to a worthy individual who demonstrates compelling need for access to one of them. In those cases, an elite guard of Equitaes travels with the soulhelm to its destination and remains as an "honor guard" for its user. It is rumored that one of the soulhelms was among the items stolen in the infamous Renegade attack upon the Onyx Tower in the 1500s.



ways through the Tempest. Though these roads came to be known as "byways," many Stygian wraiths still refer to them as the "Itinera Mortis," the roads of death. In building these roads, Charon's intent was to provide safe ways for his Ferrymen to transport waiting souls to the shores of Stygia.

— *Annals of the Dead*

They called them the deathroads for more than one reason. I remember steeling myself to the screams of the bricks and paving stones as they were laid into place by the workcrews I helped to guard. I knew that the souls whose substance made up the surface of the roads would have fallen prey to Oblivion and fed its strength. I accepted it as the way of things, and congratulated myself for being made of sterner material. But even now I rarely look at the roads upon which I tread. I fear that if I look too closely, I will see a frozen face.

— Flavius Secundus, Legate of the Ashen Lady,
Soulbook of the Legions

Those who idealize the Republic of Stygia blind themselves to the atrocities that were commonplace occurrences even then and persist to this day. It is not coincidence that the living torches which illuminate the streets of Stygia bear some resemblance to the flaming martyrs which lined the gardens of Nero and Caligula. Some will blithely pass this practice off by saying that Charon had to find some means of lighting his city, but I maintain that the Shadow of Charon had as much to do with the formation of Stygian society as did the man himself.

— Anna Spengler, *The Man of Many Faces: a Personality Assessment of Charon*

The Empire of Stygia

It took the collapse of one global structure to prompt the institution of another. Although it was a long time in coming, the fall of Rome took Stygia by surprise. Long before the actual date of its "fall," with the deposition in 476 A.D. of Romulus Augustulus, the last Western Roman Emperor, and the occupation of Rome by the German chief Odoacer, Charon's spy network had been bringing back reports to him of increased disorganization within the Empire. These agents attributed much of the growing chaos and vandalism to the incursion into the living world of Spectres, whose possession of entire tribes of barbarians imbued these warriors with a desire to loot and pillage anything in their path. Despite these obvious signs of impending doom, it was difficult to believe that anything so vast and powerful as the Empire of Rome could fall. But fall it did, and in what was almost certainly a planned synchronicity, the First Great Maelstrom swept through the Shadowlands and brought Stygia to the brink of destruction.

In the wake of this disaster, Charon took upon himself the trappings of the position he held in all but title, becoming Emperor of Stygia. As Emperor, he had no need for a Senate. But he did need advisors, so his Senators became the seven Deathlords, with increased status and responsibilities, which corresponded to the actual reduction of their power. Rebuilding Stygia into a city which could never again be subjected to successful invasion occupied most of Charon's attention for the next several centuries. This emphasis on defense, along with the increase in the number of Renegades whose presence threatened the integrity of Stygian society, resulted in an even greater militarization of the wraiths who willingly accepted Charon's authority. Where once the Legions and Equitaes were seen as guardians whose primary purpose was to safeguard the byways and keep order among the citizenry of Stygia, they soon became key figures in Stygia's new army of defense. Their numbers swelled, as recruitment of wraiths into the Legions assumed first priority, even before the enlistment of workers to repair the destruction wrought by the Maelstrom and the invasion of Spectres from the Labyrinth.

— *Annals of the Dead*

Not all the Deathlords accepted their change in title with grace and equanimity. It is rumored that at least one of the original seven chosen by Charon to assist him in the formation of his Republic disagreed with Charon's move toward an imperial government. The truth of this may never be known, however, due to Charon's insistence that public officials don masks to conceal their identity and focus attention on their positions rather than their personalities. Because of this, no one will ever know for certain whether the original Senators are indeed the current Deathlords. If there were, in fact, dissenters among Charon's first advisors, we can only speculate as to their fates. When the Ferrymen voiced their objections to Charon's assumption of the title of Emperor, he banished them. But the Ferrymen, even in the earliest days, held some modicum of autonomy...and banishment was the most that Charon could ordain for them. The punishment meted out for the defection of one of his most trusted counselors can only be left to one's darkest imaginings. Even now, rumors whisper of a powerful, ancient Gaunt who calls herself the Senator and who dwells in self-imposed exile in an isolated Citadel deep within the Tempest, after the fashion of the Roman aristocrats who opposed their Emperor. Other rumors hold that this "Renegade" Senator is imprisoned within the walls of the Onyx Citadel, condemned to watch forever the Councils of the Deathlords.

— Amalie Millefleurs, Curator of Special Collections,
A New History of Stygia

The Great Library of Stygia

In 47 B.C., the library of Ptolemy I in Alexandria was consumed by flames, and subsequently appeared — with its contents intact — in the Shadowlands. A monumental effort by Charon's followers relocated the library to his new city of Stygia, where it became the center for a growing collection of relic manuscripts.

The Artificers soon learned to fashion paper and ink from soulplasm to augment the small supply of precious relic parchment, and wraiths with a literary bent found the means to produce lasting documents. The donation of such works became one means for achieving favor in the eyes of the rulers of Stygia, particularly when these items expressed laudatory views of Charon's government. Other works, not so complimentary, also found their way into the Library's archives through less voluntary means. Scrolls and, later, books discovered and seized in raids on Renegade and Heretic strongholds were not destroyed, since they provided valuable evidence in the trials of captured wraiths. Instead, these often caus-

tic commentaries on the Hierarchy were relegated to restricted rooms within the Library, where only trustworthy researchers and others with good reason were allowed admission.

This compromise between the needs of censorship and respect for the written word epitomizes the dual nature of the Hierarchy. Like Psyche and Shadow, the volumes contained within the repository of the Great Library are a work of duality. The more accessible books readily present the image of a benevolent, noble-minded, strong and disciplined ruling body. But in the dark recesses of the innermost rooms, down winding stairways and through lightless passages, dwells the other "face" of the government of Stygia: this one viewed by outsiders as malevolent, petty, tyrannical and obsessed with its own power. Still, there are many honest facts in the volumes open to the public, and more than a few outright lies mixed into the criticisms and dark histories of the Hierarchy. Truth and Falsehood share one roof in the heart of the City of Eternal Death — and none, not even the librarians, can separate them.

There were ample warnings given. I, myself, risked life and limb to bear tidings to the Senate that the might of Rome was waning and that her time of rulership over Europe was swiftly drawing to a close. I was called a doomcrier, and worse, by the Senators. Charon, although he demonstrated great civility in the doing, chided me for my alarmist tendencies. My loyalty to and faith in him was such that I doubted the veracity of my own perceptions up until the Maelstrom blasted through the streets of Stygia. I fought alongside my Cohort at the foot of the Onyx Tower until we were forced to flee to safer ground. I was one of the few survivors of that debacle. So shaken was I that I announced to any who could hear me the dark suspicions I had begun to harbor — that Charon took our warnings seriously and chose to ignore them, that he gambled the very existence of Stygia in order to create a situation which would deliver the reins of absolute power into his hands. Those were my last words spoken as a free citizen of the Republic of Stygia. See now my eternal "reward."

— Julianus Claudius, from the *Imprimatur*

The Age of Rebuilding

In the Skinlands, the centuries which followed the fall of Rome saw the rise and fall of numerous petty kingdoms among the Germanic tribes who moved in to fill the vacuum left by the loss of Roman leadership. Though referred to by some historians as the Dark Ages, for us this period was in fact anything but dark. It was a period of renewal and revival for Stygia, as Charon set about strengthening his new empire. This he accomplished in two ways — by increasing the structural defenses of Stygia and by boosting the morale of his army.

The creation of the sea-wall to surround the Isle of Sorrows took place during this period. The wholesale repair and expansion of the roadways, and the rebuilding of the Onyx Tower and other buildings destroyed in the First Maelstrom, taxed Stygia's resources to the fullest. Fortunately, however, the many wars, plagues and disasters that took place in the Skinlands provided Charon's Legions with ample labor and resources for the tasks at hand. A plague swept through Europe in the 6th century, halving the population, while in 543 A.D., a series of earthquakes in many parts of the world swelled the ranks of the Restless Dead.

Aside from his obvious talents as a builder of empires, Charon also demonstrated an uncanny ability to ensure the undying loyalty of his followers. The creation of the Imperial Order of the Sickle served not only to reward those wraiths who risked themselves in the defense of Stygia, but also to provide an incentive for other wraiths to follow. The Shadowlands were still awash with Spectres loosed during the Maelstrom, and Charon had need of troops eager to do battle with them. The possibility of attaining status as one of Stygia's elite warriors brought forth many volunteers.

It was during this time that Charon realized the need for a body of laws to regulate the activities of wraiths with regard to the Skinlands. The need to keep the worlds of living and dead separate and to prevent excessive interaction between mortals and wraiths only partially motivated the creation of the *Dictum Mortem*, or the Code of the Dead. While it did serve to protect mortals, the Code also formed the basis of the judicial system which became the legal groundwork for the Hierarchy.

— *Annals of the Dead*

Not all the Deathlords were in favor of Charon's laws defining the limits of interactions between the Quick and the Dead. Though they appeared to be designed to prevent meddling with the affairs of the living, in the eyes of Charon's closest advisors, the Code of the Dead was designed more for Charon's protection than for anything else. By forbidding wraiths to have traffick with mortals, Charon insured that none of his Deathlords could amass enough power to threaten him. Anyone attempting to do so by violating the Code would brand herself a criminal. It was a brilliant political coup, since it solidified Charon's authority over the Underworld.

— Anna Spengler, *The Man of Many Faces: a Personality Assessment of Charon*

The Middle Ages

The political structures that emerged from the confusion of the Dark Ages provided the framework for European nationalism. In the Shadowlands, Charon was quick to note the successful implementation of feudalism as the pattern for stable government. He adapted the society of the dead to reflect the rigid forms of the monarchies of England, France and the Holy Roman Empire. Our Stygian government, having passed from republic to oligarchy to empire, transformed itself yet again, taking on a new name as it did so. The Hierarchy, so called for the first time in the history of the Underworld, was born.

There were some significant differences, however, between feudalism in the Skinlands and feudalism as practiced in the Underworld. In the Skinlands, land was the





basis of power. The feudal system provided a practical way to ensure the safety of the land by positing, first and foremost, that all land in any given country belonged to the king. He apportioned out the stewardship of that land to various nobles. Those nobles, in turn, parceled out portions of their land to lesser lords held to them through oaths of allegiance or fealty. These nobles and their families were charged with the protection of the land and of the people whose labor made the land fruitful. Those who actually worked the land and enjoyed the protection of the nobles and their knights paid for their security with their personal freedom.

In the Underworld, souls, not land, formed the basis for power. Ever since he first realized that the weaker souls who crossed the Shroud were almost immediately sucked into the Void, increasing Oblivion's strength, Charon saw the necessity for taking measures to prevent this. Long ago, Nhudri had demonstrated to Charon how it was possible to use the plasm from smelted down souls to form lasting items in the Underworld. Weak souls, lacking Fetter but unable to Transcend, were the ideal raw material for the forges of the Artificers. Their value lay in their plasmic substance, which could be formed into building blocks, tools, weapons, and other, more mundane possessions.

Writers of the Underworld

The urge to write and to publish lives on, even in the lands of the dead. Many writers and researchers remain tied to the Shadowlands because they are unable to let go of their desire to continue their studies or literary pursuits. While the Hierarchy does not forbid freedom of expression, those who openly criticize official policy or promote iconoclastic viewpoints sometimes suffer the consequences incurred by their words. Many of these authors, compelled by their tenets of belief (or prodded by the suicidal impulses of their Shadows) to voice very unpopular sentiments, have disappeared after the appearance of their works. Some, undoubtedly, grace the pages of the *Imprimatur*; others now swell the ranks of the Renegades and Heretics or have sought solitary refuge in the Tempest. Their works remain behind, however, secured within the vaults of the Great Library.

The amassing of souls, already a common practice in the Underworld, became inextricably bound to status in our fledgling Hierarchy. By definition, all souls belonged to Charon — just as in the Skinlands, all land belonged to the king. The management of those souls, however, was delegated by Charon to his Deathlords, who in their turn, apportioned their allotment of souls to loyal followers. The role of the Legions and the Knights mirrored that of their counterparts in the Skinlands: to preserve order and to protect the wraiths who were the property of their liege.

— *Annals of the Dead*

The Rise of the Guilds

The formation of guilds, which disseminated and regulated the knowledge of the Arcanos, stands as evidence of Charon's efforts to empower the growing population of wraiths who neither fell among the frail entities destined for the forges of Stygia, nor belonged with the upper echelons occupied by his troops and the now-growing administrative wing of the Hierarchy. The guilds arising in Europe provided his template. Not a few guildmasters arrived in Stygia, their lives cut short by plague, famine, or happenstance, and Charon made full use of these experts' knowledge. In this fashion, Stygian society, already strong at top and bottom, acquired a stable and, most importantly, profitable middle ground.

— *Annals of the Dead*

In truth, Charon allowed the guilds to form because he was, as always, an opportunist. The idea of forming groups based on special interests and abilities was already spreading apace throughout Stygia, and would have taken shape even without official Hierarchy approval. Charon saw a way to use the guild system to his advantage. Through this formalized structure, he was able to exert control over who would have access to the Arcanos. The clever manipulations of his agents caused the guilds not only to guard their secrets closely, but to enter into competition with one another. Though it was not impossible to belong to more than one guild, cross-membership was difficult and the means to attain higher levels of skill were closely guarded. It was believed that Charon advised his Deathlords to apportion patronage of the guilds among themselves, thus setting his advisors into an adversarial and competitive relationship with each other, and further insuring that his most powerful servants were less likely to unite against him.

— Amalie Millefleurs, *A New History of Stygia*

Plague and Maelstrom

Between 1347 and 1351, 75 million Europeans died of the Black Plague. The swarm of souls, most of them too weak to withstand the pull of Oblivion, sparked the forma-



tion of the Second Great Maelstrom. Even now, historians are divided as to whether the sudden influx of souls caused the Maelstrom or whether the resonance caused by the upsurge of darkness from the Void triggered the plague in the world of the living. Whatever the sequence of events, the lessons learned since the First Maelstrom enabled our government to withstand the force of the storm. A mechanism for dealing with the massive numbers of wraiths who arrived at one time was already in place. The Reapers of the Skeletal Lord were ready with their chains to catch and bind the weakest souls. Some few, a small percentage of the millions, still retained Fetters to the Skinlands. These were quickly absorbed into the growing number of freewraiths or recruited into the Legions. But far too many had died along with their families and friends; whole villages perished, leaving behind no survivors, nothing to hold them to the world of the living. The soul forges of Stygia were taxed beyond their capacity for many years after the arrival of the last plague victim, and great warehouses were erected to contain the thralls that awaited their turn for smelting.

— *Annals of the Dead*

A rumor that was popular during the period of the Second Great Maelstrom held that the Skeletal Lord had conspired with several Malfeans to unleash the Plague upon Europe. Jealous of the number of souls who fell under the purview of the Smiling Lord due to the incessant wars and the Crusades, the Deathlord who ruled the Legion of Dust

saw an opportunity to increase his own power in the only way open to him, the spread of disease. It was anticipated that the Legions could not possibly gather in all the expected souls. The ones who fell through the cracks (so to speak) would be the Malfeans' payment for their assistance. Of course, this is only rumor, and no evidence has been uncovered to substantiate it.

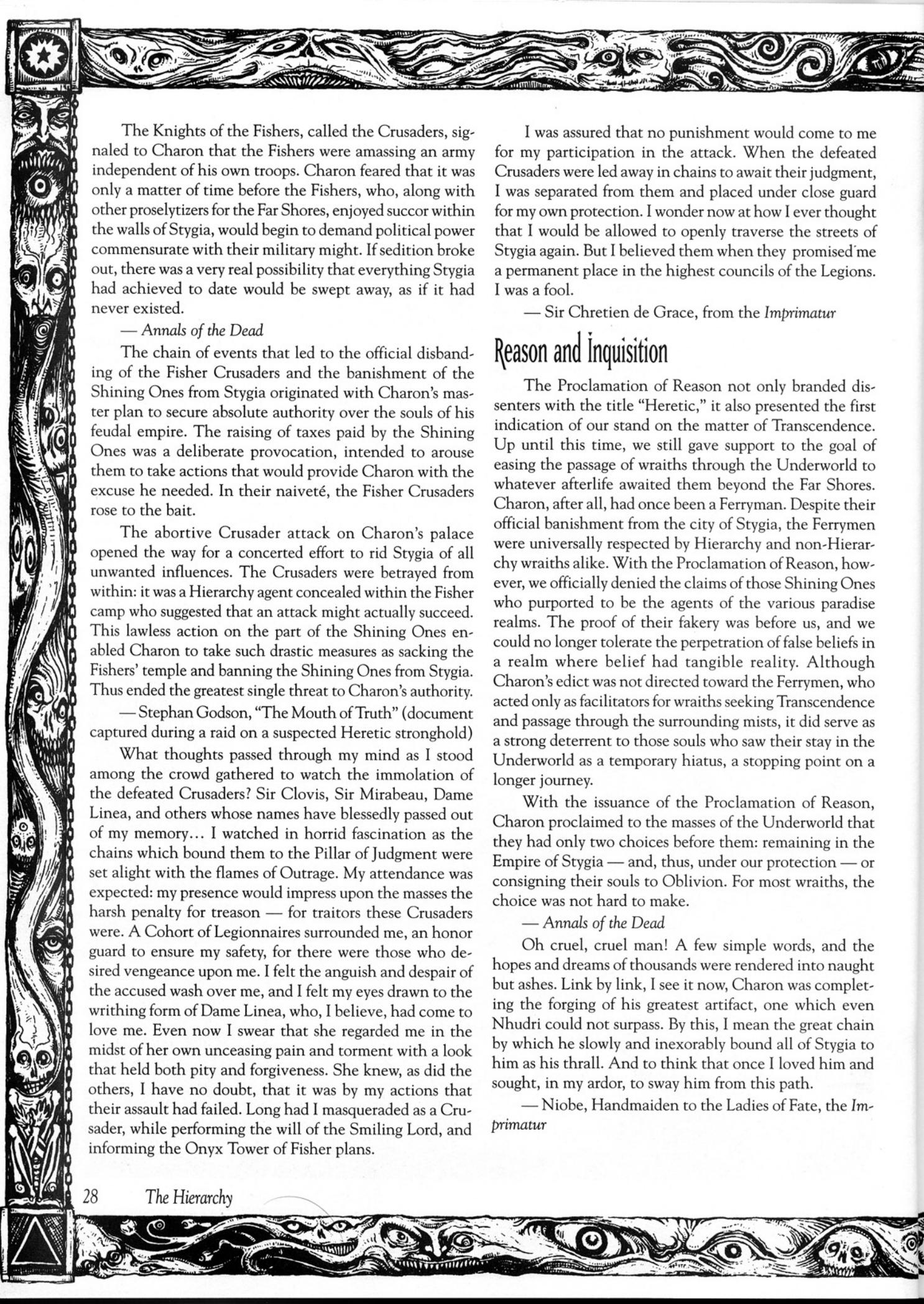
— Horace Venable, *The Power of Rumor*

The Crusades

The series of Crusades that marked Europe and the Near East during the period known in the Skinlands as the Middle Ages affected the Underworld in two ways. The arrival in the Shadowlands of fallen knights provided Charon with ready-made soldiers for his ongoing battle against the creatures spawned by the Darkness. The religious faith of some of those knights, however, also gave strength to the cause of the Fishers, whom Charon had begun to see as the greatest internal threat to the Stygian Empire. At a time when the need to strengthen the numbers of wraiths, whose existence provided a bulwark against the constant threat of erosion from the forces of Oblivion, was the greatest, the Fishers, with their promise of a paradise beyond the Sunless Sea, diverted the attention of their followers away from Stygia. This, obviously, Charon could not permit.



Ex Libris: The History of the Hierarchy



The Knights of the Fishers, called the Crusaders, signaled to Charon that the Fishers were amassing an army independent of his own troops. Charon feared that it was only a matter of time before the Fishers, who, along with other proselytizers for the Far Shores, enjoyed succor within the walls of Stygia, would begin to demand political power commensurate with their military might. If sedition broke out, there was a very real possibility that everything Stygia had achieved to date would be swept away, as if it had never existed.

— *Annals of the Dead*

The chain of events that led to the official disbanding of the Fisher Crusaders and the banishment of the Shining Ones from Stygia originated with Charon's master plan to secure absolute authority over the souls of his feudal empire. The raising of taxes paid by the Shining Ones was a deliberate provocation, intended to arouse them to take actions that would provide Charon with the excuse he needed. In their naiveté, the Fisher Crusaders rose to the bait.

The abortive Crusader attack on Charon's palace opened the way for a concerted effort to rid Stygia of all unwanted influences. The Crusaders were betrayed from within: it was a Hierarchy agent concealed within the Fisher camp who suggested that an attack might actually succeed. This lawless action on the part of the Shining Ones enabled Charon to take such drastic measures as sacking the Fishers' temple and banning the Shining Ones from Stygia. Thus ended the greatest single threat to Charon's authority.

— Stephan Godson, "The Mouth of Truth" (document captured during a raid on a suspected Heretic stronghold)

What thoughts passed through my mind as I stood among the crowd gathered to watch the immolation of the defeated Crusaders? Sir Clovis, Sir Mirabeau, Dame Linea, and others whose names have blessedly passed out of my memory... I watched in horrid fascination as the chains which bound them to the Pillar of Judgment were set alight with the flames of Outrage. My attendance was expected: my presence would impress upon the masses the harsh penalty for treason — for traitors these Crusaders were. A Cohort of Legionnaires surrounded me, an honor guard to ensure my safety, for there were those who desired vengeance upon me. I felt the anguish and despair of the accused wash over me, and I felt my eyes drawn to the writhing form of Dame Linea, who, I believe, had come to love me. Even now I swear that she regarded me in the midst of her own unceasing pain and torment with a look that held both pity and forgiveness. She knew, as did the others, I have no doubt, that it was by my actions that their assault had failed. Long had I masqueraded as a Crusader, while performing the will of the Smiling Lord, and informing the Onyx Tower of Fisher plans.

I was assured that no punishment would come to me for my participation in the attack. When the defeated Crusaders were led away in chains to await their judgment, I was separated from them and placed under close guard for my own protection. I wonder now at how I ever thought that I would be allowed to openly traverse the streets of Stygia again. But I believed them when they promised me a permanent place in the highest councils of the Legions. I was a fool.

— Sir Chretien de Grace, from the *Imprimatur*

Reason and Inquisition

The Proclamation of Reason not only branded dissenters with the title "Heretic," it also presented the first indication of our stand on the matter of Transcendence. Up until this time, we still gave support to the goal of easing the passage of wraiths through the Underworld to whatever afterlife awaited them beyond the Far Shores. Charon, after all, had once been a Ferryman. Despite their official banishment from the city of Stygia, the Ferrymen were universally respected by Hierarchy and non-Hierarchy wraiths alike. With the Proclamation of Reason, however, we officially denied the claims of those Shining Ones who purported to be the agents of the various paradise realms. The proof of their fakery was before us, and we could no longer tolerate the perpetration of false beliefs in a realm where belief had tangible reality. Although Charon's edict was not directed toward the Ferrymen, who acted only as facilitators for wraiths seeking Transcendence and passage through the surrounding mists, it did serve as a strong deterrent to those souls who saw their stay in the Underworld as a temporary hiatus, a stopping point on a longer journey.

With the issuance of the Proclamation of Reason, Charon proclaimed to the masses of the Underworld that they had only two choices before them: remaining in the Empire of Stygia — and, thus, under our protection — or consigning their souls to Oblivion. For most wraiths, the choice was not hard to make.

— *Annals of the Dead*

Oh cruel, cruel man! A few simple words, and the hopes and dreams of thousands were rendered into naught but ashes. Link by link, I see it now, Charon was completing the forging of his greatest artifact, one which even Nhudri could not surpass. By this, I mean the great chain by which he slowly and inexorably bound all of Stygia to him as his thrall. And to think that once I loved him and sought, in my ardor, to sway him from this path.

— Niobe, Handmaiden to the Ladies of Fate, the *Imprimatur*

Just as the Inquisition was formed in the Skinlands to seek out and destroy heresy, so Charon established the Council of Inquisitors, called the Magisterium Veritatis. He also created The Order of the Unlidded Eye as an order of Equitaes under the command of the Magisters. Their sole purpose, at least in the beginning, was to eliminate Heretic influence in Stygia. Later, of course, as our influence spread to other parts of the world, their role was expanded. Today, the Ministry of Truth and their knights not only seek out Heretics but also Renegades and other traitors to our cause.

— *Annals of the Dead*

Once a knight dons the mask of the Grim Reapers, she is forever bound to her appointed task. It is said that the mask bestows upon its wearer the ability to see within the soul. In this way, treasonous intents are made plain. At the same time, it is also rumored, the mask compels the wearer to do everything within her power to bring the traitor to justice. Of course, all this is mere supposition and hearsay, but it does explain why the Order of the Unlidded Eye enjoys such a fearsome reputation for dogged pursuit of its quarry and why its members show so little mercy toward their prey.

— Angus Macdonald, Master Artificer, *Secrets of the Forge*

The Age of Discovery

In the Skinlands, religious persecution drove many seekers of religious freedom to the shores of the New World, an arrangement which served the dual purpose of ridding Europe of troublesome elements of its population and colonizing rich, virgin territory with settlers at least marginally loyal to their sponsor country. In the Underworld, Heretics saw their own opportunity to distance themselves from Stygian control by skinriding the Pilgrims, Puritans, Huguenots and Catholics who flocked to Plymouth, Boston, New Amsterdam and Baltimore. Although we were aware of this wholesale flight and the blatant violations of Charon's code that accompanied it, we had too many concerns at home to take immediate actions. The Renegades, ever a threat to Stygia's stability, staged a rising, and attacked the Onyx Tower. Although they were defeated, our victory was costly.

Once again, Charon sought to consolidate our power. A policy of aggressive pursuit by the elite Orders of Equitaes pushed many Renegades into the fringes of the Shadowlands, where they would be less likely to affect the Stygia's internal stability. Internal stability had suddenly





become an issue of paramount importance. Throughout the 1500s, wars and uprisings wracked the monarchies of Europe. Many of these disturbances arose from the discontented middle class who were beginning to question the notions of divine right and hereditary rulership. Civil war in Germany, peasant revolts in Austria, rebellion in Ireland and the Netherlands — all resulted in the arrival in the Underworld of angry wraiths. This upswelling of anger, in all probability, helped to create the widespread disturbance of the fabric of the Underworld which became known as the Third Great Maelstrom.

— *Annals of the Dead*

Born of the fires of anger and resentment, the howling madness that emerged from the Void tore through the Underworld, altering its nature forever. No longer simply a mist-enshrouded, ever-present gloom, the Darkness assumed an all-pervasive identity. From this time forward, we called it "The Tempest." In some ways, it was a relief for those of us who regularly ventured into its depths to know its true name.

— Sieglinde, Centurion of the Storm Maidens

The matter of cause and effect has long been a gem for Underworld philosophers to ponder. Did the freewraith guilds take advantage of the widespread disorganization that marked the aftermath of the Third Maelstrom to stage their own uprising? Or was their attempted coup merely an attempt on the part of the Shadow-ridden guildmasters to secure their own destruction? It is true that in times of crisis, the darker side often takes control. There are those who believe that the guilds who rose up against the Hierarchy were only echoing the temper of the moment, and that in disbanding the guilds, Charon deprived himself of much that could have been useful to him in the centuries that followed. By driving the guilds underground, he abdicated any real control over them. If Charon was as paranoid and savvy an autocrat as it seemed, why would he relinquish a ready source of power and talent?

— Anna Spengler, *The Man of Many Faces: a Personality Assessment of Charon*

The Settling of the Shroud

In the wake of the Third Great Maelstrom, the Underworld experienced profound and lasting alterations. First and foremost, perhaps, was the inherent change in the nature of the inchoate substance now known as The Tempest. But there were other new factors to contend with: the separation of Stygia from the Shadowlands and the emergence of the Shroud.

When the last winds of the Maelstrom had blown themselves out, Stygia and the Shadowlands emerged as two distinct regions in the Underworld. Those whose interests lead them to cosmologic speculations have likened



The Enlightened Century in the Skinlands

The 1600s saw an explosion in the field of scientific discoveries. In astronomy, the discoveries of Tycho Brahe, Galileo's observation of the satellites of Jupiter, and observations made by Kepler, Bainbridge and other noted astronomers led to the formation of a cosmology that differed radically from all previous theories. Advances in medicine, chemistry, mathematics and physics increased human knowledge of the workings of the material world. The discovery and settlement of the

New World led to rivalries in Europe as each power sought to gain its rightful share of the storehouse of riches across the ocean, and further explorations brought even more territory to the attention of England, Spain, Portugal, France, the Netherlands, and Germany. But even in the most "enlightened" of times, there were still disasters, wars, and plagues. The following list of events, while neither complete nor all-inclusive, offers a glimpse of the century's darker side.



1601 — Authorities in Germany shut down many brothels due to the spread of venereal disease

1602 — Plague breaks out in England

1606 — Guy Fawkes and companions sentenced to death for participation in the Gunpowder Plot to blow up the House of Lords in London

1613 — Circulation of copper coins; Globe Theatre in London destroyed by fire

1631 — Naples wracked by earthquake; Vesuvius erupts

1648 — English Civil War between Oliver Cromwell's Roundheads and King Charles I's Cavaliers

1665 — Great Plague of London causes death of 68,000 people

1666 — Great Fire of London

1676 — Influenza reaches epidemic proportions in England; in France, Louis XIV's dissatisfaction at a feast given in his honor prompts suicide of famous chef, "Le Grand Vatel"

1688 — Earthquake destroys Smyrna; France at war with the Holy Roman Empire

1689 — Baden-Baden burned by French; Heidelberg Castle destroyed

1692 — Clan Macdonald massacred at Glencoe, Scotland

1697 — London's Whitehall Palace put to the torch

this separation to a wheel with Stygia as its hub, the Shadowlands as its rim, the byways and riverways as the spokes, and the Tempest as the spaces in between. More modern minds posit a similarity to the separation effect achieved by the use of a centrifuge, in which the densest matter collects at one end while lighter substances form a spectrum moving away from the "heavy" end. Onion skins and spider webs have also been used to illustrate the post-Maelstrom order of the Underworld.

All images aside, one truth remains: Stygia lies in the heart of the Underworld. Travel from Stygia to the Skinlands involves traversing the Tempest, emerging in the Shadowlands, and finding a way through the Shroud.

Why the Shroud descended upon the Underworld, forming a nearly impenetrable barricade between the worlds of the living and the dead, is a mystery that may never be solved. Certainly, there are those who claim to know the precise reasons for its existence. The most commonly accepted theory holds that, just as the Third Maelstrom mirrored the widespread anger and discontent prevalent in the mortal world, the Shroud embodied the growing mood of spiritual disbelief and the ascendancy of "rationalist" thought that heralded the Age of Enlightenment in the Skinlands. It was, in some ways, as if the mortal world rose up in rebellion, determined to put an end to encroachments of the dead upon the living. After this, it became more difficult, though not impossible, for the ac-



tions of wraiths to affect the “other side.” More significant to us, Stygia — separated as it was by the additional buffer of the Shadowlands — could not directly interact with the Skinlands at all.

The arrival of the Shroud thus not only coincided with but necessitated our colonization efforts in the Shadowlands. The founding of Necropoli, where before had been only collection posts dedicated to funneling souls from their point of entry to the processing centers of Stygia, came to be of primary importance.

— *Annals of the Dead*

What the Hierarchy fails to comprehend, what they insist on glossing over, is the simple fact that they had as much to do with the division of the Underworld and the coming of the Shroud as did those elements they hold responsible. Certainly the combination of the Maelstrom in the lands of death and the tide of rationalism in the living world played their part in restructuring the Underworld. But consider this: the laws banning the Heretics from Stygia and disbanding the guilds drove a dividing wedge between Stygia and a large portion of her population. Add to this the number of Renegades who fled Stygia after their uprising failed, and the result should be plain to anyone with an iota of understanding of how emotion fuels substance in this mercurial demi-world. The Hierarchy itself created the division between Stygia and the Shadowlands. The weight of souls bound to the Hierarchy and to Charon’s laws dragged Stygia away from its former connections with the living world. As Charon became more and more obsessed with building a structure that could withstand Oblivion, he also — perhaps inadvertently — erected barriers that served to wall off the world of the living. And so, too, did the Shroud come into being. The Code of the Dead, designed to protect mortals from the wiles and whims of the dead, took centuries to achieve solid form, but achieve it, it did... in the shape of what we call the Shroud.

— Jacobo Fermi, spokesman for the Cult of the Great Invention (transcript of speech given at his trial for membership in a Heretic Cult), *Acta of the High Court of Stygia*

Age of Enlightenment

What if you reached the age of reason
Only to find there was no reprieve
Would you still be a man for all seasons?
Or would you just have to leave
We measure our days out
In steps of uncertainty
Not turning to see how we’ve come
And peer down the highway
From here to eternity...

— Al Stewart, “A Man for All Seasons”

The Rise of the Middle Class

Despite the increasing difficulties in communication between Stygia and the Shadowlands, we continued to keep pace with developments in the Skinlands. Some of our knowledge of the happenings in the mortal world came from newly acquired souls. The Deathlords paid well for the identification and acquisition of wraiths with specialized knowledge or skills. These individuals, when brought to Stygia, often found positions in the household of the Deathlords who claimed them, and their reports on the events they witnessed when alive helped formulate government policy. In this fashion, we have been able to make the adaptations necessary to retain our strength in the Underworld.

The reports of constant warfare between the nations of Europe as well as the multitude of internal civil and religious conflicts awakened in Charon the realization that the real power in the mortal world lay, not with the noble classes — for their numbers could not keep pace with the steadily growing population of the lower economic strata — but with the blossoming middle class of freemen (and in a few cases, freewomen). As this middle class increased in number, so too would the proportion of wraiths coming from this class. The disbanding of the guilds had, unfortunately, alienated many existing freewraiths, driving some of them from Stygia into the distant Shadowlands and leaving others to wander discontented through the streets of the Underworld’s capital. Now Charon moved to win back these disgruntled members of his society. The forges of Stygia, still under the supervision of the Artificers — now assimilated as official artisans — produced swords of Stygian metal in unprecedented numbers. These weapons went into the hands of as many freewraiths as were willing to swear eternal loyalty to the Legions that offered them protection and stability. More than a century before its enactment as part of the American Bill of Rights, the right to bear arms became a fact of life in Stygia, and Charon now commanded the allegiance of the freewraiths.

— *Annals of the Dead*

Charon was never one to hedge his bets. Historians make much of the “calculated risk” that the Lord of Stygia took when he made his decision to arm the populace. But there was less of a risk involved than they think. It was all in the swords, you see. They were all invested with some special power — some say that Charon and his Deathlords all gave a part of their own Pathos, others say it was a piece of their very plasm — that strengthened the loyalty of anyone who accepted such a weapon. In the Hierarchy, we try not to do anything by halves. If we put a sword into a wraith’s hands, we try to keep that weapon from turning against us; I don’t want to talk about what happens when we fail.

— Angus Macdonald, *Secrets of the Forge*

The Fate of the Lowest Class

Of the dead, there have always been three kinds: Those who die peacefully, their life story told to the fullest; those who die before their life's purpose is fulfilled; and those who merely die because they have merely lived. The first sort never appear in the Underworld; their fate remains unknown to us. The second forms the ranks of the Restless Dead, wraiths condemned to search in death for the resolution and purpose denied them in their lives. The last (and by far the most numerous) arrive in the Underworld as empty, unfettered souls who, unless prevented by extreme measures, immediately fall prey to the irresistible pull of Oblivion. Ever since Charon first recognized the threat posed by these hapless creatures, he purposed to discover how best to deal with them.

Sacrificing them to Oblivion was unthinkable. The best solution was to bind their wretched souls with chains made of Stygian steel, anchoring them to the Underworld. Nhudri's Artificers had long ago discovered how to transform the plasm of souls into objects which had form and substance in the lands of the dead; Charon found in their knowledge a use for these enslaved but purposeless creatures. Soon the forges of Stygia became foundries which provided Charon with the tools for building both city and Empire.

Suddenly, the reaping of unfettered souls assumed a new importance. Stygia rewarded Reapers and bounty hunters well for the safe delivery of marketable "wares." The trade in thralls soon became the cornerstone of our economy.

Just as any society with an elite upper class needs underlings to perform essential services, so too did the need arise among the Deathlords and the Equitaes for loyal retainers. Wraiths who possessed minimal Fetters but were still more than mindless collections of plasm proved ideal candidates to fill this vital niche in Stygian society. Bound with special chains that robbed them of any rebellious intents while strengthening their ties to the Underworld, these wraiths composed a higher class of thralls — that of household servant. The nobles of Stygia offered handsome compensation for wraiths of this calibre, and began to vie with one another for the ownership of particularly talented servants. Chained wraiths also provided sources of Passions which could be siphoned off by their masters. There are some who maintain that the medieval notion of binding serfs to the land came from the practice of chaining wraiths and even drones to Haunts and other places connected with strong emotions — rather than the obverse. In any case, the term "thrall" was adopted during the early Middle Ages to replace the increasingly unacceptable label of "slave."

— *Annals of the Dead*



Ex Libris: The History of the Hierarchy



To say that there are abuses in the thrall trade is to describe a Maelstrom as a strong wind. Rampant misconduct in the collection of newly arrived souls has become the rule rather than the exception. Reapers — particularly freelancers who sell their takes to the highest bidders in the slave — I mean, thrall — markets of Stygia — work with rogue Monitors who use their expertise in Lifeweb to sever captured Lemures from their more powerful Fetters, thus rendering them pliable as potential thralls. The Fetters thus acquired form the basis for a whole other area of trade. It's dirty work, but the Passions collected just from the act of Severing provide an instantaneous and addictive high. Instant gratification on the job and the promise of payment in Stygia make for an unbeatable combination. I swear, if the scrupulous Reapers give in, we might as well just throw ourselves naked into the Tempest and save the Spectres the work.

— Frankie LoBello, *Confessions of a Reaper*

Certainly, as the world's population grew, the numbers of Fetterless candidates for the rendering fires increased proportionately. Under Charon's direction, however, we have never lacked for ways to use soulplasm. The road and rail systems that form the great interconnective network of byways through the Tempest, the massive bulwarks that form Stygia's defenses, the materials used for buildings, tools, even the paper upon which these words are written (and the implements of writing), are made from the rendered Corpus of souls. We depend on the traffic in souls. We must embrace this concept of extracting maximum efficiency from even our most minimal contributors. We do not have the luxury of prisons or charitable institutions. We fight a war against Oblivion, and those who do not actively participate in that war must be prevented from weakening our efforts. There is no room for welfare, workfare, or a free-lunch mentality in our noble struggle. Those who do not aid us willingly must reap the consequences of their refusal. Those who are too weak to fight for us, even for themselves, can still serve as our weapons, our tools, and our building blocks.

— Imelda Mariposa, Inspector for the Necropolis of Orlando (transcript of an indoctrination speech given to new staff members)

Age of imperialism

Just as the 17th and 18th centuries saw great changes in the Skinlands, so, too, the Shadowlands experienced a series of revolutionary developments. Following up on reports that the Heretics who had fled Stygia after the Proclamation of Reason had discovered a vast new territory in the Shadowlands, Charon sent his own explorers and scouts to the New World. The exploits of the Fifth Le-

gion, also called the Legion of the Black Hawk, proved instrumental in establishing our presence in North and South America. In short, wherever the armies and mercantile companies of Europe went, we soon followed. Thus we ensured that all souls that rightfully belonged to Stygia found their way into our hands rather than into the clutches of the Heretics.

Our first outpost in the New World, the Necropolis of New Amsterdam, immediately began proving its value to Stygia as a collection point for the souls of European colonists and soldiers who met their deaths far from their countries of origin. Constructing byways and waterways through the Tempest created an immense demand for laborers and building materials, a demand which, fortunately, was met by the increasing death tolls from wars, famine, diseases and disasters as well as the high attrition rate among settlers in the European colonies.

As the tide of imperialism swept across Europe, other lands were discovered and claimed by various nations. India, the African continent, Australia and the Orient all felt our presence as the Legions of Stygia followed the conquering Europeans, establishing Necropoli and collection outposts in every new settlement or military post. It was an era of excitement, growth and constant discovery.

— *Annals of the Dead*

Just to set the records straight, it wasn't the Legions who settled the Necropoli. The glorious armies of his most respected majesty the Emperor were too busy gallivantin' around the Tempest to bother with the little details involved in putting together a settlement. That work fell to us members of the "forgotten Hierarchy." It's all well and good to talk about the Centurions and the Marshals and the Regents and the marvelous jobs they do. But the real management of any Necropolis falls to the Clerks and Inspectors and Adjustors. The Legions round up souls and bring them in to the collection centers, but we're the ones who process them. We take their names, decide who's a keeper and who's bound for the furnaces. We house 'em and make sure they're ready for the shipment transports. When the history of Stygia is written or rewritten or whatever, just make sure that it's not all battles and "the Legions did this, that, and the other." I realize it's not as exciting reading about civil servants, but without us you'd have a bunch of shackled souls all dressed up with nowhere to go.

— Mattie Gavvan, senior Clerk assigned to the staff of the Anacreon of the Ashen Lady, Necropolis of Des Moines (excerpt from a letter to Amalie Millefleurs, author of *A New History of Stygia*)

Harvesting the Natives

Contact with the native populations of these new lands produced several not-altogether-planned-for side effects. In the Skinlands, the slave trade quickly reestablished itself. As early as 1517, European monarchs had begun granting monopolies to various merchants involved in the transportation of slaves taken from Africa. The trade in human flesh blossomed with the discovery of even more sources among the natives of the Americas. Once absorbed into the colonial system as laborers on the cotton plantations of the Deep South, the sugar cane and tobacco plantations in the West Indies or as menials of various sorts on the European continent, the souls of these individuals, upon their deaths, rightfully belonged to us. Unfortunately, this led to conflict with the Dark Kingdoms of Ivory (in Africa) and Jade (in the Orient). These Kingdoms, in turn, purported to claim for themselves any souls, regardless of their origin, who died in lands under their control.

It should be noted that in their haste to claim the rich territory of the New World and to find safe haven as far from the Hierarchy as possible, the Heretics gave unwitting assistance to our future colonization efforts. The extermination of the Dark Kingdom of Obsidian, which occupied the Shadowlands corresponding to Central and South America, ensured temporary Heretic supremacy in those areas. This ruthless destruction ironically aided the Hierarchy substantially. When our Legions began to assert our own claims to territory in the New World, we benefited greatly from the lack of native opposition in the Southern Hemisphere.

Negotiations between our ambassadors and delegates from the Dark Kingdoms began, then broke down in the face of widespread violations on the part of the supposed representatives (in reality, spies and saboteurs) from the Kingdoms of Ivory and Jade. A series of wars between our Legions and the armies of the Dark Kingdoms erupted on three fronts. During this period, the only real victors were the Spectres who lay in wait, ready to harvest the souls ignored by the battling armies. Ultimately, this growing threat provided the common ground necessary for both our forces and the Dark Kingdoms to reach an accord. No one wanted to lose valuable souls to Oblivion.

The Nativity Compact finally settled the dispute in a manner that was acceptable to all sides. In essence, the Compact stated that a wraith's country of origin determined her allegiance, regardless of where she met her death. Although we regretted the loss in potential resources and revenue, the Compact provided vital assurance that no Hierarchy wraiths would be co-opted into the service of any of the Dark Kingdoms. This, at least, meant that we could extend our protection to the souls of European settlers as they continued to populate the newly discovered lands.

— *Annals of the Dead*



Ex Libris: The History of the Hierarchy



The Hierarchy of Charon condemns us for our destruction of the Empire of Ix Chel, the Feathered Lord of Obsidian, yet they would have done the same for a lesser purpose. Having seen with our own eyes how they profited from the souls delivered to them on the sacrificial altars of their fleshbound kin, our only thought was to put an end to this madness. In truth, we feared that we had fled one tyrannical power only to fall into the clutches of another. So unholy and unkempt were their practices, so alien and incomprehensible their cities of warped design, that to many of us it seemed as if the Spectres themselves had settled in the Shadowlands and created an Empire.

— Francisco Maria del Castillo, “The Holy War” (document presented to the Great Library by the Magisterium Veritatis)

With the decision to change the economic standard from the bartering of thralls and goods to a monetary system, we achieved a new level of mercantile sophistication. The construction of mints in which Artificers hammered soulplasm into coins, called oboli, made payment for services rendered to Stygia infinitely less cumbersome. By decree, the oboli were recognized throughout Stygia and the Shadowlands as legal tender, redeemable in any Necropolis for goods and services. This provided considerable incentive for Reapers, who only had to worry about getting their charges to the nearest Necropolis, where they could carry off a small sack of spendable coin after cashing in their haul.

— Jason Dunworth, *Economy and Power in Stygia*

The 18th century saw the proliferation of revolutions. The American Revolution in 1776, the French Revolution of 1789, an abortive rebellion in Ireland, and other uprisings throughout Europe only heralded the upsurge of new political movements in the world. We fought our own battles during this time, with Renegade and Heretic factions eager to claim their share of the souls fallen in these battles for independence. Most of the pressure fell on the Necropoli, situated as they were in the thick of the uprisings. In fact, the only real repercussions felt in Stygia were the frequent interruptions in shipments of souls caused by upheavals in the Shadowlands and the increasing pleas for reinforcements from the Anacreons of the beleaguered Necropoli.

While at first Charon urged his Deathlords to augment the numbers of their Legions in the Necropoli, he soon realized that his outposts needed more immediate assistance. His decision to empower the Anacreons in the Shadowlands to draft their own personal armies was intended as an emergency measure. These new Legions became permanent fixtures in the Necropoli. Soon entire armies of Hierarchy warriors whose primary loyalties lay with their local government — rather than with a Stygia

they had never seen — caused dissension within the highest levels of Charon’s Empire. Charon’s reply to those who expressed their concern regarding the faithfulness of these distant Legions is still quoted whenever the question of Necropolitan loyalties arises. “They still use swords of Stygian steel.”

— *Annals of the Dead*

Materialism and Industrialization

In 1837, Victoria ascended to the British throne, becoming ruler of an Empire that included not only the British Isles, but also Canada, Australia, and India. The Victorian Era, at least throughout the English-speaking world, heralded the birth of the modern age. The growth of institutions as self-perpetuating entities independent of the ideas that spawned them reflected the increasing separation between the tangible world of things and the intangible world of concepts. Scientific research, once the province of knowledge-seekers, became a tool for the advancement of technology. Even the branches of learning once concerned with bridging the gap between spirit and flesh — philosophy, metaphysics, and history — reoriented themselves in the direction of proving that the flesh was all that existed. The dialectics of materialism propounded by Marx and Engels, the theory of evolution expressed by Darwin, and the developing fields of sociology, economics, and psychology all focused almost exclusively on the denial of any reality other than that which could be experienced by the senses or explained by natural laws.

This development had unforeseen repercussions in the Shadowlands. Charon’s Code, meant to conceal from mortals the truth of the world beyond the Shroud, lost some of its relevancy in the face of the stalwart barricade of disbelief which mortals erected for themselves. Even conventional religion altered its focus from the afterlife to the present world, emphasizing increasingly rigid codes of conduct for the living. The Shroud strengthened to near impermeability, closing off passage between the Shadowlands and the Skinlands. Haunts and Fetters still allowed access to the living world, however, and wraiths with access to either or both were quickly recruited by our Legions for increasingly important tasks. Whatever their beliefs concerning the reality of life beyond death, mortals still died, and the ever-increasing world population guaranteed a steady increase in the numbers of dead. The channeling of souls away from the pull of Oblivion and into our Legions assumed Herculean proportions.

— *Annals of the Dead*

It seems ironic that alongside the triumph of materialism and rationalistic thought, another small but intense movement awakened. In 1871, Helena Blavatsky founded

the Theosophical Society, an organization devoted to the study of metaphysics and occult doctrines. The theosophists and other spiritualists made many attempts to penetrate the Shroud. It was as if, having helped bring its substance into being, mortals were now intent upon exploring what lay beyond it.

Unfortunately, many Spectres, as well as irresponsible wraiths, took advantage of the spiritualist revival of the late 19th century, accepting the open invitations by gullible and trusting mediums to run amuck in the Skinlands. Of necessity, stern punishments awaited wraiths found guilty of trafficking with mediums, even if their desire was only to communicate with their loved ones in the mortal world. With assistance from the "other side," the fad soon subsided.

— Ludmilla Hoffstein, Centurion, Cohort of the Watchers Upon the Shroud, Legion of Paupers, Necropolis of New York, *Echoes Across the Shroud*

The Shroud Locks Down

With the strengthening of the Shroud, the Necropoli of the Shadowlands assumed greater importance in the smooth running of the Hierarchy. Their proximity to the Skinlands made these cities of the Restless Dead into much more than mere collection centers for newly arrived wraiths. In many cases, the Necropoli served as our only "windows" onto the living world. These local representatives of Stygian rule took on the added responsibility of acting as sentinels, anticipating when and where large numbers of deaths would take place and making certain that the wheels were set in motion for gathering and processing new souls.

In many cases, Anacreons had to function without direct guidance from Stygia. While a few of these local governors saw this forced autonomy as an additional burden on their already heavily laden shoulders, most Anacreons welcomed the relative independence from Stygia that came from their isolation in the Shadowlands. Rising to the occasion, they assumed the reins of power as if they had been preparing for them all along (as, indeed, many of them had). Viewed from one angle, Stygia suffered a significant loss in power due to the locking down of the Shroud. From another perspective, however, the true virtue of the Hierarchy manifested itself in its ability to function without the direct supervision of Stygian-based agents. The institution proved to be self-perpetuating.

— Jason Dunworth, *Economy and Power in Stygia*

The inventions of the 19th century opened our eyes to new possibilities. From the ironclads that plied the waters of the Atlantic, we learned to fashion our own ships of Stygian metal — dark iron monsters that churned their way through the rivers of the Underworld. The arrival of

A Century of Growth and Improvement

The increase of knowledge in the Skinlands between 1800 and 1899 rocked the foundations of Stygia in many ways. On the one hand, discoveries in medicine led to a reduction in deaths from infection due to unsanitary practices. Vaccinations and treatments also greatly diminished the mortality rates of plagues and epidemics. On the other hand, chemists and physicists continually discovered scientific principles, which led, ultimately, to the creation of more efficient implements of death and destruction — repeating rifles, gunpowder, safety matches, and torpedoes. This was the age of invention, and many of the "new-fangled gadgets," including the railroad and ironclad ships, eventually found their way across the Shroud.

1800 — Muskets with interchangeable parts invented by Eli Whitney

1801 — Robert Fulton's "Nautilus," one of the first submarines, created

1805 — Use of rockets reintroduced into the British Army

1814 — Construction of steam locomotive by George Stephenson

1825 — First passenger-carrying railroad line runs from Darlington to Stockton

1831 — Cholera pandemic reaches Europe

1846 — First year of famine in Ireland

1859 — Drilling of first oil well in Pennsylvania

1865 — "Sultana" explodes on the Mississippi River, killing 1,700

1866 — Dynamite invented by Alfred Nobel

1871 — Great Fire in Chicago

1888 — Tesla builds electric motor

1890 — Worldwide influenza epidemics

1891 — Famine in Russia

1894 — Plague bacillus discovered



railroads and motor cars transformed travel through the byways. Each new discovery, each technological advance soon found its way into our hands. We awaited the deaths of scientists and inventors with shameless anticipation, for from their memories we gleaned new knowledge. Even better were the occasions when an entire factory or scientific laboratory went up in flames, providing us with tangible objects we could use, examine, and eventually simulate. For those of us who remembered the invention of the waterclock, it was a time of constant wonder.

— Philemaeus, Artificer to the Laughing Lady, *The Passage of Centuries*

It seemed in those days as if everywhere you looked, someone was forging a new weapon to use against humanity's oldest enemy. Vaccines for diseases like cholera and small pox cut into the heretofore massive numbers of souls destined for the Legions of the Skeletal Lord. Once mortals took it into their heads that there was no balmy afterlife, they began to fight death with a vengeance. In some places, they even abolished the death penalty. Humanitarianism was on the rise, too. Reform movements sprouted up everywhere in Europe and America, advocating everything from tenement reform to laws regulating child labor. This kind of attention to daily working conditions resulted in a serious diminishing of deaths due to "happenstance." To put it mildly, the Emerald Legions

worried that their numbers, too, would suffer. On the other hand, the Ashen Lady profited from the increased lifespans that came as a result of all the advances in medicine and health. Barring everything else, so long as mortals died unfulfilled, they would eventually come under her aegis.

It was even mouthed about (quietly, though) that she and the Smiling Lord had managed to tweak the minds of mortals in certain directions that would lead them to make some of their life-extending discoveries. After all, the Deathlord who oversaw the victims of violent death had little to worry about; no one was likely to come up with a cure for war or murder in the foreseeable future.

— Corina Fairchild, *Stygian Politics*

Don't believe everything you hear. The Smiling Lord didn't exactly ride high over the corpses of the wardead either. His Legions had to claw their way through a mass of Renegades and Heretics, all of whom were eager to get their hands on the souls of soldiers killed in all those European wars. The American Civil War had an extra complication, too, since the Ivory Queen put in her claim on the souls of anyone with African blood. I had it straight from the backstairs of the Laughing Lady's court — she put a dead bee in Charon's ear that the Smiling Lord needed to be taken down a peg or two, and that by allowing the Ivory Queen her claim over wraiths of African origin — even if they were free soldiers who fought and died for the Union

— he would be mitigating the imbalance of power that was building up among his Deathlords. I tried to tell the Smiling Lord himself that he was being cheated. He called me mad. I'm not mad. I just tried to tell him the truth.

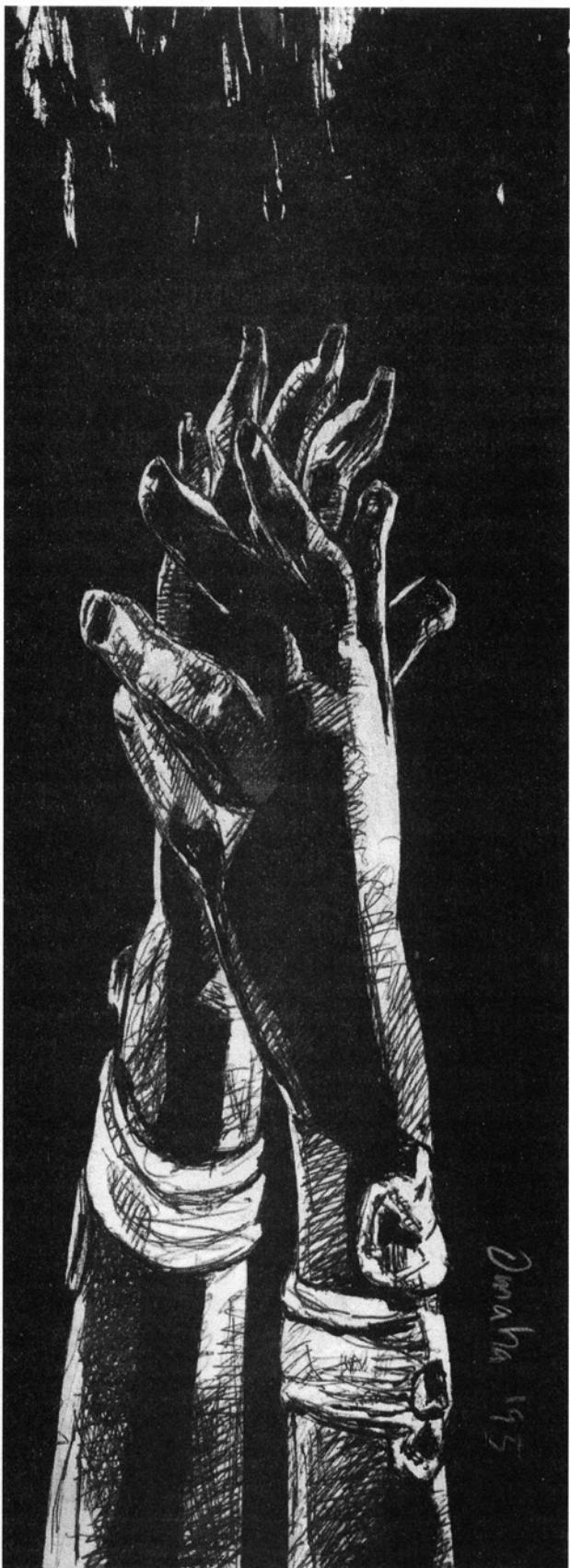
— Johnny V., the *Imprimatur*

Prisoners of Stygia

How were the Fetters of the Deathlords destroyed? This question has puzzled many in the Hierarchy since the discovery, toward the end of the century, that Charon and his Seven had become virtual prisoners of Stygia. Some have speculated that their inability to travel even so far as the Shadowlands was a direct result of the solidification of the Shroud and the separation of Stygia and the Shadowlands into two distinct regions. More astute minds attributed their confinement to the loss of that which had once tied them to the Skinlands.

But what were these items, these Fetters of the Deathlords and of Charon himself? The masks of the Deathlords served their original purpose of concealing the identities of these august personages to such an extent that few, if any, knew their names or even the lands of their birth. There is a strong possibility that the sheer weight of centuries caused most of these Fetters to deteriorate, decompose, or rust away. Certainly none of these objects of attachment were living beings. Those sorts of Fetters, while powerful for a time, contain the seeds of their own dissolution in the ticking of the mortal timeclock housed within each fleshy body. The rulers of Stygia, having lost the warmth and passion of human bonds, had recourse only to cold, unfeeling ties to places or things.

And yet, for all their remaining Fetters to pass away, seemingly within a single century...? There is one possible explanation, my own private theory, that has to do with certain events which transpired in the Skinlands during the 19th century. Between 1808 and 1815, excavations began around the ancient, ruined city of Pompeii. Explorations of the Roman catacombs were conducted and their results published in the 1860s. In 1812, Burckhardt discovered the temple of Abu Simbel. In the 1870s, Schliemann's discovery of Troy and his explorations of Mycenaean ruins came to light. While the unearthing of these splendid monuments to history might have increased the stature of the Deathlords and otherwise strengthened their hold on the world of the Living, the new sciences of archaeology and anthropology were responsible for troops of amateurs and experts whose pokings and proddings at digs and excavation sites destroyed as many artifacts as they unearthed. It is my belief that, instead of preserving their memory, the Fetters of the Deathlords fell prey to the clumsiness of history's detectives.



Ex Libris: The History of the Hierarchy



Whether this was coincidental or deliberate is another question entirely. Some say the Deathlords themselves caused the destruction of their own Fetters, or, more likely, that they allowed information to "leak" through the Shroud which would lead mortal explorers to the Fetters of their rivals, in an attempt to weaken each other's power in the Skinlands. Once this ploy was successful for a few of the Deathlords, rumors say that Charon, in a fit of anger, declared that what held for one of his advisors held for all, and he took it upon himself to ensure that all the Fetters of all the Deathlords perished utterly. Further, to stifle any criticism of his actions, Charon is said to have personally destroyed his own Fetters — thus ending forever all possibility of direct meddling by any of Stygia's most powerful. Of course this is all hearsay, and the mere possession of this knowledge, however spurious, could lead to unfortunate consequences.

— Timea of Capua, former Pardoner to the Quiet Lord, the *Imprimatur*

The Twentieth Century

Of all the periods in the history of the Hierarchy, the current century presents the greatest enigma to serious students of the interaction between the Shadowlands and the Skinlands. At one and the same time, the 1900s have seen the overwhelming ascendancy of science and technology — strengthening the tide of disbelief — as well as the growth of a new spiritualism that may one day reverse some of the effects of the Shroud. The increasing regimentation and automation of 20th century life has so weakened the human spirit in general, however, that the number of souls fit only for the smelting fires has grown alarmingly. Fortunately, through the adoption of mass production and transportation technologies, we have acquired the necessary tools to cope with the wholesale garnering of souls.

Medical research has all but eradicated many diseases which could once be counted on to deliver thousands of souls to the Underworld. However, the appearance of other, even deadlier mutagenic ailments, along with the persistence of such standbys as cancer and heart disease, and the increase in worldwide famine, indicates no great lessening in the number of souls for the Skeletal Legions. Natural disasters, of course, continue to take their toll in mortal lives, and the perverse insistence of some mortals on making their homes atop faultlines or in areas susceptible to hurricanes and tidal waves guarantees that the Lord of Happenstance will continue to reap his fair share of death's harvest. The escalation of violence goes without saying. In an era which has seen two world-wide conflagrations that have resulted in millions of deaths, the day-to-day instances of murders and small-scale wars hardly seem worth mentioning. The other Deathlords, too, con-



tinue to increase their Legions. Some might argue that this latest period of history has proved a particularly profitable one for the gathering of wraiths whose deaths come under the auspices of madness, despair, mystery and age.

— *Annals of the Dead*

Inevitably, when discussing the modern age, we must divide the century into two periods: before and after the disappearance of Charon. While all Stygia — and much of the Shadowlands — continues to mourn the absence of the singularly most important individual in the history of our realm, we may console ourselves with these thoughts: the guiding principles which Charon established over the course of his reign continue to direct the policies of the Council which succeeded him; moreover, his departure has signified the Hierarchy's coming-of-age. Whether or not Charon went to his doom with any foreknowledge that he would not return, it is almost certain that he entered his final battle secure in the knowledge that his legacy would survive. We are that legacy.

— Emile Franck, preface to *A Concise History of the Modern Hierarchy*

Isolation and independence

The detractors who condemn Stygia for cutting loose the Necropoli from their direct supervision, charging her with isolationism and a failure to meet her responsibilities to her subsidiary colonies, fail to appreciate the very real exigencies affecting the heart of the Underworld. It was once common knowledge, but has perhaps since been forgotten, that Stygia's central location places her at the nexus point in the ongoing battle with Oblivion. The need for amassing strong internal defenses, particularly in the wake of the difficulties of maintaining reliable contact with the Necropoli, has forced her to concentrate on affairs close to home.

Furthermore, Stygia's loosening of the reins of control over the perimeter settlements of the Shadowlands reflects their confidence in the abilities of the local authorities to implement the established protocols and procedures inherent to the government of the Hierarchy. The Anacreons and their Legions represent the pinnacle of the Hierarchy's administrative and military talent. Those closest to the points of entry of the newly deceased know best how to deal with local conditions. It is simply too much to expect constant monitoring of distant affairs by Stygian agents. The strength of the Hierarchy lies in its graduated system whereby authority can be delegated to those representatives who are in the best positions to carry out their responsibilities.

In short, Stygia must deal with her own affairs; the Necropoli should do likewise.

— Cornelius van de Voort, Chancellor to the Legions of the Grim, *Soulbook of the Legions*

The Great War, 1914 – 1918

Where have all the soldiers gone, long time passing?

Where have all the soldiers gone, long time ago?

Where have all the soldiers gone?

Gone to graveyards, everyone

When will they ever learn?

When will they ever learn.

— Traditional, "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?"

The death toll of the First World War exceeded 8 million. The number of dead that passed through the collection terminals of the Shadowlands and the processing centers of the Necropoli staggered the imagination. Word traveled to Stygia that massive shipments of souls would soon be arriving, and the city made what preparations it could for the influx. Laborers slaved to enlarge the already existing warehouses and build new ones. Trains from Stygia arrived loaded with nothing but cars full of manacles, and sometimes the local Legions still ran short of chains with which to subdue the masses of wraiths, many of whom arrived fighting. Groups of souls were Moliated together in some cases to make them easier to handle.

In the Necropoli of Europe, normal activity ceased altogether for the duration. The American Necropoli sent troops and materials, where they could spare them, to the front lines in return for a share of the harvest. To this day, some Anacreons in France and the Low Countries still owe sizable favors to their counterparts in New York and points west.

For its own part, Stygia's economy boomed. Even though most of the new souls were tagged for the furnaces, the thrall market thrived. Of course, the most promising wraiths were inducted into the Legions, but finding them was often a matter of sheer luck.

The increased availability of resources sparked the expansion of Stygia as new buildings arose beyond the Isle of Sorrows. City planners experimented with many new architectural styles. The skyscraper, which made its first appearance in the Skinlands in Chicago in 1883, soon became a prominent part of the Stygian landscape. Networks of bridges linked the center of Stygia to its new suburbs. From a distance, the sight of Stygia, rising up from its island fastness and spreading out across cantilevered spans of iron to connect with soaring steel towers, left no room for doubt. Here was the heart of the Empire of the Dead.

— *Annals of the Dead*

It's funny how death will take the fight right out of a man. Most of the souls we reaped were little more than boys, fresh-faced and wild-eyed from their sudden plunge into carnage and their even more sudden departure from



life. Still, we lost a lot of them. The Renegades and Heretics had their own Monitors in the Skinlands, who sounded the alert whenever large battles erupted. The Spectres were particularly bold as well, plucking many souls right out of our grasp. Our main advantage lay in our training, though. As Legionnaires, we had practiced this drill many times, so in most cases we were able to cut our losses to an acceptable minimum — acceptable for us, anyway. Our Centurions had to do a lot of explaining to the local Regents about the ones who got away.

— Edgar Rice, Centurion of the Grim Legions, London station, *Soulbook of the Legions*

The Aftermath of War

Just as in Stygia, the Shadowlands experienced its own growth spurt. Although many European Haunts suffered damage from the war, rebuilding and refortifying them proved relatively simple due to the increase in the availability of building materials imported from Stygia. New Haunts also arose on the battlefields of the Marne, Ypres, Verdun and countless other sites across Continental Europe.

After the First World War, German colonies passed into the hands of the French and the English. These shifting boundaries of political influence in the Skinlands had little overall effect on the Shadowlands, however, as our pacts with the Ivory and Jade Kingdoms prevented the harvesting of African and Oriental souls. The Dark Kingdoms would claim their own, regardless of which European power held territorial control in the mortal world. Still, as European and American business interests spread beyond their own continents, we were able to put down roots in the growing cities of Africa, India, and South America, constructing permanent Necropoli to handle the souls we could rightfully claim.

— *Annals of the Dead*

In Stygia, the trials of the First Consuls of War and Pestilence stirred up the populace to an unprecedented degree. Faction fights broke out in the streets between supporters of the accused — primarily made up of Legionnaires in service to the Smiling and Skeletal Lords — and those who insisted that the Consuls were guilty of misconduct. Although the truth of the matter may never be known, their acquittal was generally held to be a matter of policy. That they had been brought to trial was significant in and of itself. No one actually suspected that the Council of Deathlords would approve the imposition of sanctions on actions to increase revenue in the Underworld. In defense of the Consuls, it was argued that mortals were capable of coming up with trench warfare and mustard gas on their own, without any assistance from beyond the Shroud.

— Corina Fairchild, *Stygian Politics*

Maelstrom and Madness

Centuries had passed since the last major Maelstrom. Spectres born from the souls of the hordes of unclaimed war dead and fueled by the bitterness of the defeated (as well as the spite of the victors) swarmed over the Shadowlands in a scourge of terror. In the Skinlands, escalations of gang violence, workers' riots, and the proliferation of hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan in the American South, the Fascist party in Italy and the Nazis in Germany resonated with echoes from beyond the Shroud.

The worldwide economic depression instigated by the stockmarket crash of 1929 brought more souls to the Underworld, but many of these fell into the clutches of Spectral gangs. Many others, their spirits broken in life by the loss of jobs, homes, and families, died with nothing to hold them anchored in the Shadowlands. These entered the Underworld as prime candidates for Oblivion. The miasma of despair and seething anger which gave form and substance to the lingering winds of the Maelstrom made travel nearly impossible outside the Citadels and other heavily fortified areas of most Necropoli.

In a few instances, temporary alliances formed between various Hierarchy, Renegade, Heretic and independent groups of wraiths, who agreed to put aside their philosophical differences to concentrate on fending off attacks from Spectres long enough to harvest the new souls emerging in the Shadowlands. Born of immediate necessity, these truces rarely survived long; they accomplished their intended purpose, but soon broke apart over the division of the "spoils."

— *Annals of the Dead*

Prelude to War

On the night that Ernst Roehm died voices rang out
In the rolling Bavarian hills
And swept through the cities and danced in the gutters
Grown strong like the joining of wills
And echoed away like a voice in the distance
In moonlight carved out of steel
Singing "All the lonely, so long and so long
You don't know me, I long how I long
You can't hold me, I'm strong now, I'm strong
Stronger than your law"
I sit here now by the banks of the Rhine
Dipping my feet in the cold stream of time
And I know I'm a dreamer, I know I'm out of time
With the people I see everywhere...
They don't care who Ernst Roehm was,
no reason they should

February 1, 1931

My most august Lord,

It is with deep regret and profound reluctance that I send you the tidings of my resignation as Anacreon of the Silent Legion for the Necropolis of Boston, Massachusetts. My years of service to you have not been without a sense of achievement, but the growing feeling of disconnection from the central government in Stygia, coupled with the increase in responsibility demanded by the lack of effective communications, has made it impossible for me to continue to fulfill the requirements of my position.

It is not my intention to criticize Stygian policy in general, or your leadership in particular, but I must, in good conscience, question the Council's apparent lack of interest in events that transpire beyond the boundaries of Stygia. The current crisis in the mortal world has taxed the resources of my Legions beyond their limits, yet my pleas for assistance here in the Shadowlands of Boston have apparently gone unheard. I cannot believe that your administration lacks the means for augmenting my civil and military forces, and so I can only conclude that your functionaries have determined that my request does not constitute sufficient grounds for action on my behalf.

It may be that you are unaware of the growing tide of depression and despair that is sweep-

ing over the world beyond the Shroud. The worldwide economic collapse has created a tide of new arrivals which fall under the auspices of the Silent Legion, and our office here in Boston is ill-equipped to deal with the logistics of gathering and processing them. The latest shipment of currency has been delayed without explanation, and morale within the Legion is degenerating swiftly. I feel that I have failed you in the execution of my duties, but I also feel that, in some small part, Stygia has failed me as well.

I have no other recourse, therefore, than to express my profound sorrow by the only means available to me. I have done what I can to put my affairs in order. I have scheduled an appointment with a Pardoner for a final consultation, and I have appointed a successor to my post who, I hope, is better able to deal with the sense of abandonment that has been my personal undoing. By the time this missive reaches your person — if, in fact, it succeeds in making its way into your hands — I shall have crossed the final barrier and consigned myself to whatever fortune awaits beyond the Void.

I remain, for as long as that is possible, your obedient and loyal servant,

August Sommers, Anacreon of the Silent Legion, Boston, Massachusetts

— from the epistolary file, archives, Great Library of Stygia

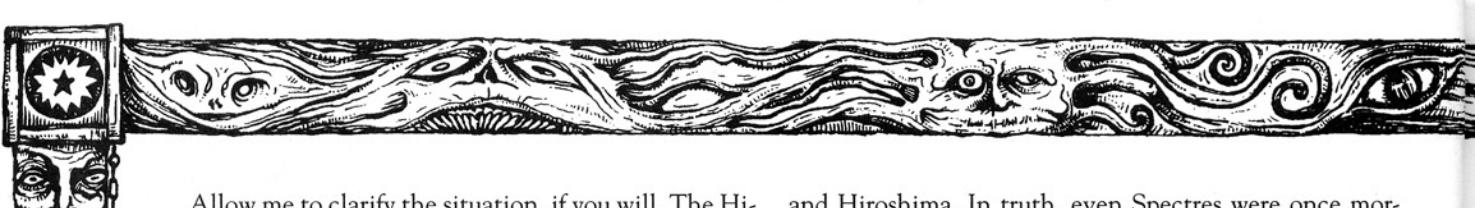
*Just a shadow that hangs in the air
But I thought I saw him cross over the hill
With a whole ghostly army of men at his heel...*

— Al Stewart, "The Last Day of June 1934"

If Stygia had become isolationist during the early part of the 1900s, the Necropoli went through their own period of parochialism, surrounded as they were by the all-pervasive turmoil of roving Spectres. Preoccupied with keeping their own Haunts and Citadels safe from invasion by Maelstrom-spawned creatures, our troops in Europe cannot be blamed for their failure to notice the rampant intrusions into the Skinlands of gangs of Spectres, bent upon stirring up the malice and hatred that was the legacy of the First World War.

The punitive famines in the Soviet Union, used by Stalin to consolidate his hold over the Russian economy through the nationalization of agriculture, resulted in the death of an entire class of independent farmers. As early as 1933, the concentration camps in Germany funneled a stream of souls into the Underworld. The bloody battles of the Spanish Civil War and the massacre of Assyrian Christians in Iraq sent early warnings throughout the Shadowlands that an even greater tumult lay ahead. Most Necropoli, however, found little time to analyze the events in the Skinlands. The constant influx of souls bound for Stygia kept them far too busy to take note of the larger conflict that loomed on the horizon.

— *Annals of the Dead*



Allow me to clarify the situation, if you will. The Hierarchy exists for the orderly collection and processing of the souls of the dead. It is not the overseer of the affairs of the living. The Code of Charon has seen to that by forbidding the Restless Dead from interfering with activities in the Skinlands. We merely react to the consequences that the living heap upon themselves.

Unfortunately, Spectres are not bound by the *Dictum Mortem*. Neither the Heretics nor the Renegades feel constrained by the laws of a government they repudiate. In short, our hands are tied. In attempting to protect the living from the dead, the Code of Charon has also denied the living the protection of the dead. We are our brothers' reapers.

— Natalya Orushenski, Regent to the Anacreon of the Emerald Legions of the Necropolis of Warsaw, *Soulbook of the Legions*

Allegedly, Charon used the outbreak of war in the Pacific as an excuse to mobilize the Legions against the forces of the Jade Emperor, whose foothold in San Francisco constituted a serious encroachment on the Nativity Pact. In reality, Charon was forced to respond to the Jade Emperor's violations of that agreement by sending his iron ships as guarantors for the Hierarchy's claims to the souls of Allied soldiers in the Pacific. Similar problems arose with the Ivory Queen in Northern Africa. Blatant kidnapping of souls by the Dark Kingdoms threatened the Hierarchy's sovereignty over the wraiths of German, British, Italian and American troops in the deserts of Egypt and Libya.

Since they held no allegiance to the Hierarchy or to the Code of Charon, the forces of the Dark Kingdoms freely engaged in transgressions against the sanctity of the Shroud. Popular belief held that the kamikaze pilots were actually holy warriors who had studied the forbidden ways of the dead and willingly sacrificed themselves for the glory of the Empire of Jade rather than the Rising Sun. Arriving in the Shadowlands — along with their relic planes — with full knowledge of their duty, they plunged immediately into the battle for the souls they took with them into the Underworld. Only a strong Hierarchy presence in the Pacific prevented the wholesale loss of souls to the Jade Emperor's minions.

— Vincent Voegl, Marshal to the Anacreon of the Emerald Legions, Necropolis of Honolulu, *Secrets of the Dark Kingdoms*

The Fifth Great Maelstrom

No one expected two Great Maelstroms in less than a century. Then again, no one expected that mortals would achieve the awesome power of utter destruction represented by the atomic bomb. It is too easy to cite Spectral coercion as the root cause for the annihilation of Nagasaki

and Hiroshima. In truth, even Spectres were once mortals. The capacity for destruction is an inherent part of the human condition. If it were otherwise, our Shadows would have no real power over us.

— Ludmilla Hoffstein, *Echoes Beyond the Shroud*

The End of an Age

Without a doubt, the disappearance of Charon from the Underworld stands as the single most significant event since the creation of the Empire of Stygia. When Gorool appeared from the depths of the Sunless Sea, the foundations of the great city trembled. Those who saw the monstrous Malfean and survived to tell the tale swore that they looked into the face of Oblivion.

Who can say what prompted Charon to take upon himself the twin role of savior and sacrifice? Rumors hint that he received a visit from an unknown Oracle on the eve of Gorool's rising. Others state that Charon simply "knew" — with the peculiar knowledge given to the greatest of leaders — that only he could defeat the Malfean. Still others claim that Charon possessed no special guarantee that he could ensure Stygia's survival, but that he found it impossible to stand idly by while his dreams shattered around him.

In the end, we can only speculate. Few had the leisure, in the midst of the utter chaos brought on by the threat of impending, irrevocable disaster, to consider the possible motivations that brought Charon to his destiny. Although a multitude watched as, maskless, he sailed his boat for the last time, none thought to look upon his face — or, having looked — dared recall the features exposed, for the first time in millennia, to the pale light of the Underworld. None thought to say farewell.

— *Annals of the Dead*

Clad in the cowled robe he wore when he was but a simple Ferryman, Charon ended his rule as he began it... a sailor upon the Sunless Sea. I myself stood for the first time in centuries upon the Stygian shore, drawn there by an unknown current to bear witness to the passing of he who was once first among equals. As he stepped into his reed boat, grasping his pole with unpracticed hands, he shook back his cowl and bared his face to the open sea. In that instant, I saw him — and saw what the ages had written upon his countenance. I will bear the memory of that visage forever, and I will share it with no one.

— from the *Journal of Actemaeon, Ferryman*

The Hierarchy After Charon

Many predicted that without our Emperor, our Hierarchy would collapse. Indeed, in the period immediately following Charon's disappearance, a wave of panic swept



through Stygia. Many wraiths, overtaken by despair, cast themselves willingly into Oblivion. The citizens of the Underworld's greatest city feared that at any moment a concerted attack by Spectres, Renegades or Heretics would find Stygia ill-prepared to defend herself.

But Charon had not left us helpless. The strength of his vision soon asserted itself as the Legions of the Deathlords resumed their patrols and slowly restored order to the streets of Stygia. No obvious commands were issued; no proclamations went forth from the Great Council Hall. The wheels of government simply continued to turn. Charon had designed his Hierarchy so that we could exist independently of any single member.

The Code of Charon provided the basis for order, and the Deathlords assumed the reins of command, assuring the populace that their leader's absence was only temporary. Before the destruction of his Fetters, Charon had left the confines of Stygia for short visits into the Shadowlands, and we had managed to function without him. Gradually, the panic subsided. Souls still arrived by the trainload in Stygia; the forges still needed tending; death went on about its business. Order and discipline prevailed.

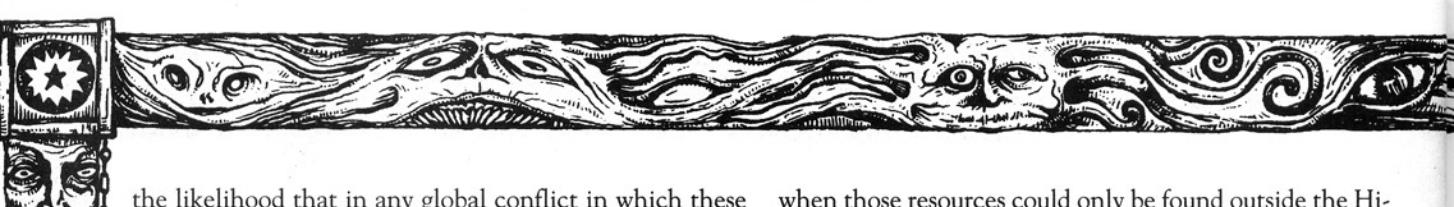
— *Annals of the Dead*

The word for what we felt when we heard that Charon had disappeared was liberation, not abandonment. Too long had we trembled in our boots over each discrepancy from "official Hierarchy policy." With his departure, all that ended. In the Shadowlands, we felt as if great weights had been lifted from our shoulders. Now we could drop even the pretense of clearing our activities with Stygia. Over the past century we had grown used to handling our own affairs. The Deathlords still ruled the Legions; that was never in doubt. Without Charon as a driving force compelling them to maintain a supervisory eye on their forces in the Shadowlands, however, we felt certain that they would be content to occupy themselves with their own affairs in Stygia.

— Jonathan Kingsley, former Anacreon of the Gaunt Legions, Chicago, from the *Imprimatur*

The Nuclear Age

The threat of nuclear war in the Skinlands prompted our Legions in the Shadowlands to take unprecedented actions. Under normal conditions, warfare beyond the Shroud meant growth to the economy of the Underworld and an increase in our military strength. The existence of the atomic bomb, however, brought us face to face with



the likelihood that in any global conflict in which these weapons were employed, Oblivion would be the ultimate victor. The deaths of individuals added to our strength; the death of the human race, on the other hand, would bode only disaster for our future.

Realizing that Stygia was still reeling from the loss of Charon, many Anacreons took it upon themselves to employ drastic measures to minimize the danger of another world conflict. In order to obey the spirit of the Code of Charon, they reasoned, it was necessary to reinterpret it. Although meddling in mortal affairs was strictly forbidden, the rampant violation of this precept by the gangs of Spectres unleashed by the Fifth Maelstrom had to be stopped. It seemed, therefore, that the code mandated limited incursions into the Skinlands by Cohorts trained for the sole purpose of locating and rooting out Spectres. To augment the effort, Hierarchy officials in the Necropoli recruited auxiliaries from the growing population of wraiths who avoided affiliating themselves with any of the factions in the Underworld.

— *Annals of the Dead*

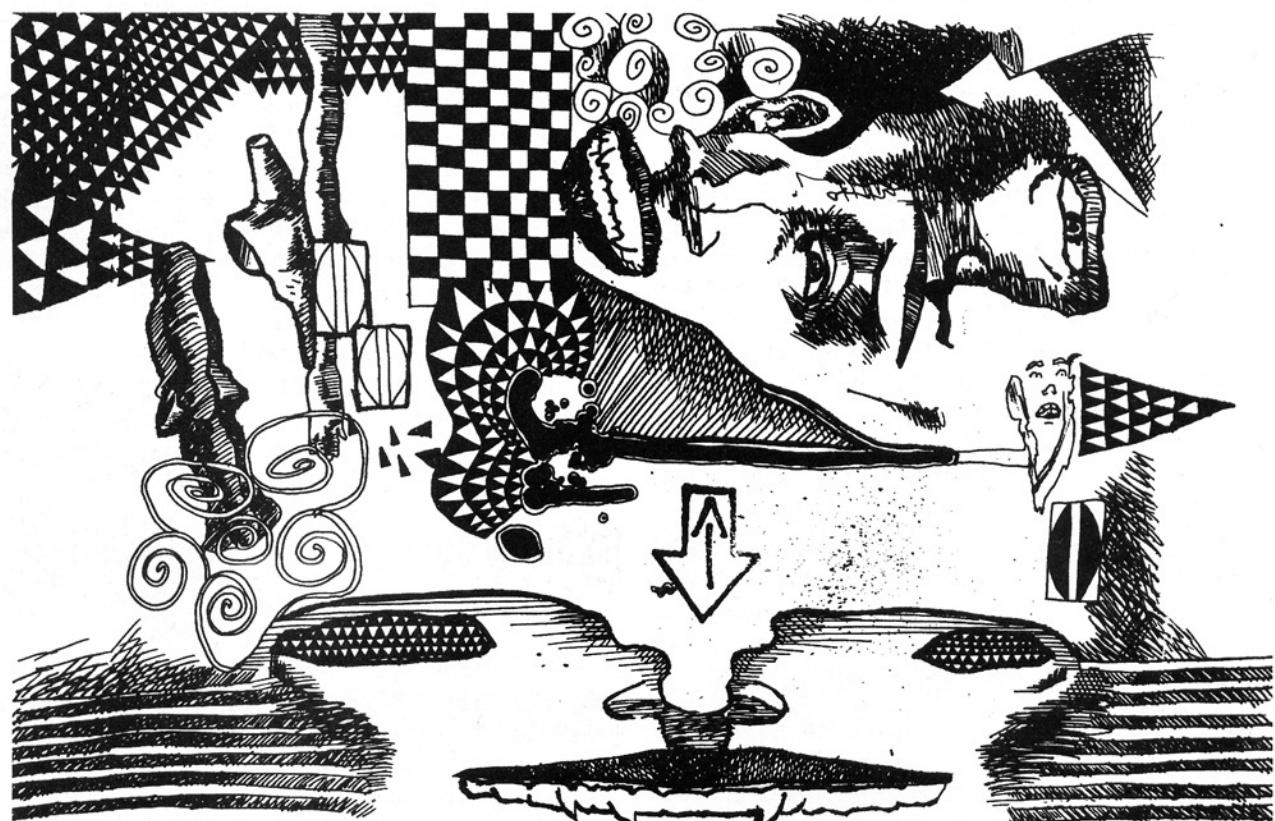
Desperate times gave rise to desperate measures. That we sought the assistance of certain Renegade and even Heretic Circles during the period of escalating political tension in the Skinlands is one of our most closely guarded secrets. Stygia's inability to offer timely support forced those of us in the Necropoli to rely on our own resources, even

when those resources could only be found outside the Hierarchy. Realistically, we realized that many Renegades and Heretics had better contacts in the Skinlands than we did, and were far more adept at some of the forbidden Arcanos than were most Legionnaires. They also tended to possess Haunts closer to the sources of potential trouble. We did what we had to do, and covered our tracks as best we could.

— Vivienne Cartier, Special Agent to the Legions of the District of Columbia, *Soulbook of the Legions*

Despite the rigors of the Shroud, the echoes of paranoia and suspicion that swept through the world in the decade after the bombing of Japan leaked into the Shadowlands as well. Rumors of massive infiltrations by Spectres kept the Legions of the Necropoli busy combing the known Haunts in their assigned sectors. Administrators in the Shadowlands recruited informants from among the local citizenry to report any suspected Spectrelike activity. For awhile, each Cohort had at least one member privately charged with the duty of monitoring the activities of her comrades. Several Dopplegangers were, in fact, discovered during this period — some of them quite highly placed in the local Legions. It was a time for increased vigilance and self-purification.

Emergency tribunals convened in most Necropoli to try the cases of wraiths suspected of aiding and abetting Spectres or of being Spectres themselves. Guilty verdicts brought with them swift and final retribution. In some few



instances, where the trials involved high-ranking Citadel officials, the Order of the Unlidded Eye was summoned from Stygia to oversee the proceedings. This period of trial and testing resulted in the emergence of a stronger, more vigorously loyal Hierarchy focused on the defense of the Shadowlands and the protection of our noble vision.

— *Annals of the Dead*

It was unfortunate that many wraiths took advantage of the prevailing atmosphere of the 1950s to denounce their fellow citizens for personal reasons. This abuse of the courts of justice eventually led to the cessation of the trials. By that time, most of the known or suspected Spectres and their traitorous allies had been discovered and eliminated, and the local authorities agreed that a relaxation of vigilance was in order. Later analysts of the period have pointed out the peculiar concurrence in the Skinlands of the anti-Communist "witch-hunts" organized by Senator McCarthy in the United States.

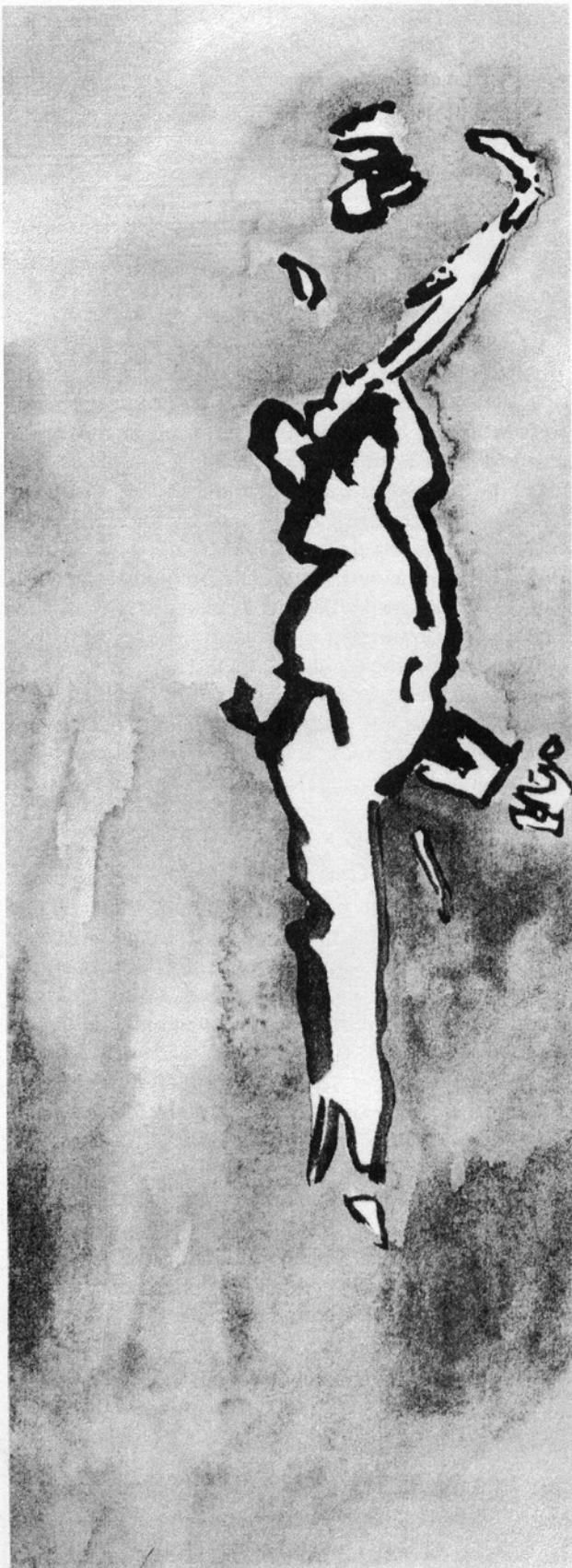
— Ludmilla Hoffstein, *Echoes Across the Shroud*

The New Hierarchy

In the latter half of the 20th century, we have made great strides toward adopting a more flexible attitude suitable to the changing nature of the times. The harsh repression of the years immediately following the Fifth Great Maelstrom gave way to a period of political largesse. The philosophical changes going on in the Skinlands certainly had some effect on this side of the Shroud. The arrival of wraiths possessed of strong Fetters and even stronger opinions about personal freedom and individual rights necessitated the formulation of an "open-door" policy in many Necropoli. These individuals demonstrated valuable skills, and great care was taken to avoid driving them into the arms of the Renegades and Heretics.

The Shadowlands have become, in some ways, a second Empire. Although Stygia, with its forges and factories, remains the economic heart of the Underworld, the crucial work of collecting and transporting souls rests in the Necropoli. The endless war against the Spectres that continue to wreak havoc in the Shadowlands has caused a reordering of priorities to reflect the realities of the present. One law cannot cover all contingencies, and situations vary greatly from Necropolis to Necropolis. Following the example set long ago by Charon, we have learned to adapt our policies without changing our principles.

— *Annals of the Dead*





War and Peace

And it's one, two, three
What are we fightin' for
Don't ask me, I don't give a damn
Next stop is Vietnam
And it's five, six, seven
Open up the Pearly Gates
There ain't no time to wonder why,
Whoopee, we're all going to die

— Country Joe and the Fish, "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die-Rag"

Were it not for our persistence in maintaining outposts within the Southeast Asian territories of the Empire of Jade, the Vietnam War would have proven as devastating to the Shadowlands as it did to the world of the living. Driven deep into hiding by the purges of the 1950s, the Spectres flocked to the jungles of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam with the outbreak of hostilities in that region. Only timely action by Legions in place, as well as reinforcements who traveled with U.S. troops, prevented the wholesale loss of thousands of soldiers to the armies of the Maelstrom. Relations between the Jade Empire threatened to deteriorate rapidly during this period, but our Legions stood firm in their purpose: the reaping of souls which rightfully belonged to Stygia. Despite unavoidable losses, we gained many useful recruits for our Legions during this bloody conflict.

— *Annals of the Dead*

Many Necropoli, particularly those in America and England, responded to the growth of spiritual awareness in the Skinlands by actively competing with Renegades and Heretics for the souls of protesters, flower children, activists and other "free spirits." The reasoning was simple: it was "us" or "them" — and every soul lost to the Hierarchy only increased the ranks of our opposition. The strongest arguments for seeking out these problematic recruits came from the Anacreons of the Emerald Legions, the Penitent Legions, and the Legion of Paupers. Certainly many of these souls fell under the aegis of happenstance, mystery and madness. In light of the tremendous gains made by the Legions of the Grim during the 1960s and 1970s, the efforts to attract these fledgling rebels and fanatics served to help maintain the balance of power among the Deathlords.

In truth, enlisting these wraiths in the Legions proved less difficult than originally anticipated. Most of them were so overwhelmed by the experience of dying that our experienced Reapers were able to shepherd them into our fold, merely by offering them the vision of a great society, in which everyone was judged according to her merits, and

no poverty, unemployment or purposeless labor existed. Political radicals provided more of a challenge, but many of them responded to the possibility of effecting change not from outside, but from within the system. Our education programs soon convinced these agitators that few systematic changes were, in fact, necessary. There were, of course, some failures, but we managed to save a significant number of souls from the clutches of our enemies.

Many traditionalists warned that the assimilation of unorthodox souls into the ranks of the Legions would undermine the Hierarchy's structural integrity. To a certain extent, this did occur. Many of the new recruits refused to differentiate between loyal Hierarchy members and Renegades, consorting freely with various outlaw elements. The breakdown of long-standing animosities, however, also had positive repercussions. In times of emergencies, these new Legionnaires were able to call upon the assistance of their rebel "friends" to bolster the defenses of the Necropoli against incursions by Spectres.

— Leslie Durant, Recruiter for the Legion of Paupers, Necropolis of Los Angeles, *Soulbook of the Legions*

Winds of Change

In the Skinlands, the wide-eyed idealism and righteous anger of the 1960s subsided into the jaded cynicism and closed-door politics of the 1970s. The sense that the world hovered on the brink of spiritual renewal shattered with the realization that a decade of love and protest had not, in fact, altered the character of the world or its leaders. The Watergate scandal exposed massive corruption in the halls of America's government, but it was only the tip of an iceberg of political maneuverings, dethronings, coups, rebellions, and assassinations. The Vietnam War escalated into a massive and deadly bombing campaign; a new wave of violence erupted in Northern Ireland and the Middle East; hostilities broke out between Christians and Moslems in Beirut; and anti-apartheid sentiment reached a boiling point in South Africa. A wave of independence movements swept the world, with Europe finally granting autonomy to many of her colonies in Africa and the Pacific. Even more surprising were the number of accords and treaties that emerged in the 1970s: East and West Germany formally recognized each other, the Helsinki Accord brought together 35 nations for mutual security and cooperation, the U.S. and the Soviet Union began exploring the possibilities of limiting nuclear experiments, and — at long last — the Vietnam War came to an official end.

Correspondingly, in Stygia and the Shadowlands, political changes within the Hierarchy were remolding the Underworld. Many Necropoli, in particular those most distant from the Empire, declared themselves politically,

if not economically, independent from Stygia. Though they maintained a Hierarchy presence, the Legions' loyalties were clearly directed toward their local Anacreons rather than their leaders in Stygia. The Hierarchy of other Necropoli responded to these palace revolts in one of two ways. Some Anacreons who still maintained close ties with Stygia feared that a similar occurrence in their territory would bring down the wrath of the Deathlords. To prevent this, they increased security and did everything in their power to make it clear that they would tolerate no hint of disloyalty. Other Anacreons averted the issue of independence entirely: they instituted liberal policies that provided the trappings of autonomy, but did not necessitate the actual severing of political ties with Stygia.

In Stygia itself, profound changes were underway. After more than 20 years, it had become clear to the Deathlords that Charon would not be returning. Speculation ran high that a new Emperor would be chosen from among the Deathlords. The odds seemed to favor the Smiling Lord, whose Legions had profited inordinately from the multitude of wars and civil disturbances and whose storehouses were packed with thralls slated for the smelting fires. The Skeletal and Emerald Lords also stood as possible candidates to inherit the Mask of Charon, for disease, famine and disasters still claimed large numbers of souls. The atmosphere of uncertainty became almost unbearable as rumors flew far and wide of secret arrangements and political intrigues transpiring behind the closed doors of the Great Council Hall. The tension of the situation became apparent in the relations between the Legions of the various Deathlords, and the bonds that had formed between individuals who served different Deathlords came under increasing amounts of strain.

With the confirmation of the rumors of the disappearance of Charon's Mask, the threat of the eruption of full-scale rioting hung over Stygia. For the first time, the populace seemed to realize that which the Deathlords had long surmised: Charon was gone, and no single person could replace him. Swift action on the part of the Deathlords succeeded in averting widespread panic. In a proclamation which resounded throughout the entire city, the Deathlords announced the transformation of Charon's Advisory Council into the Ruling Council of the Empire of Stygia. Each Deathlord then made a short speech reaffirming his or her dedication to the principles which had, over the centuries, maintained order and stability in the Underworld. The dream of Charon would not fade, but would multiply seven-fold.

— *Annals of the Dead*

What of the Legions of Fate in all this? The enigmatic Ladies of Fate kept apart from the public display surrounding the announcement of Stygia's new Oligarchy. In fact, few people could recall the last time Fate had directly in-



tervened in Stygian affairs. In the past, visits from a Lady of Fate or one of her handmaidens had guided Charon to some of his most significant decisions. In fact, if not for the Lady's support and advice, the Hierarchy would have never come into being at all.

Why, then, would she turn her back on the Hierarchy? Some believe that the Ladies of Fate have withdrawn their support from the Ruling Council. Others maintain that the Deathlords themselves refused to admit Fate into their company, fearing that the Seat of Fate would exert the same hold over them as it had over Charon. A few hushed voices whisper of a new city arising on the Isle of Eurydice, from which Fate's minions hope to remake the Underworld.

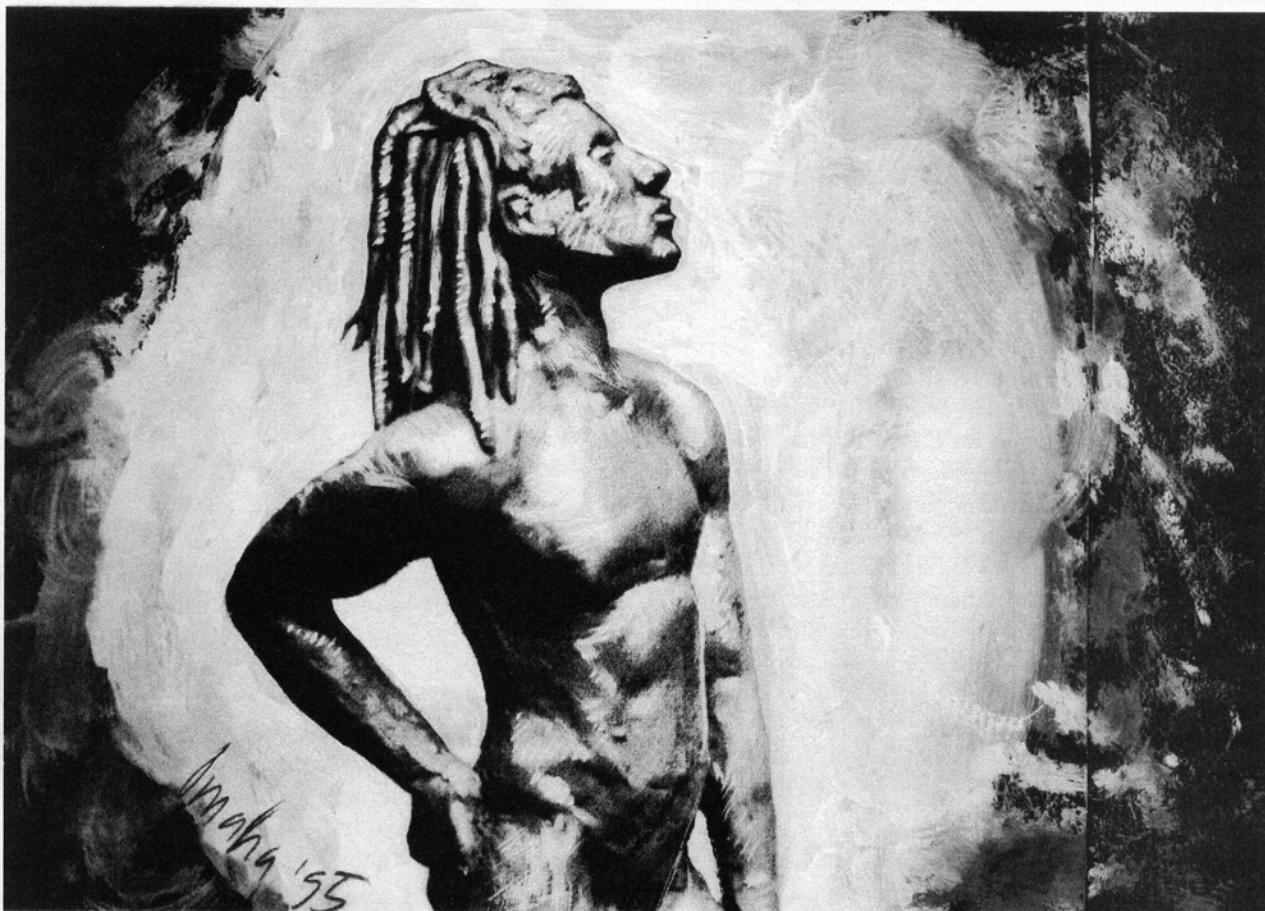
And yet, rumors also paint the Ladies as the keepers of Charon's seat. Some say they will choose a successor when one is worthy; some hint that they wait for the return of Charon himself. Still others say that Fate guides the Council even now, ever so quietly encouraging Stygia toward a new golden age. Whether any of these allegations are based on fact may never be known by any outside the Legions of Fate.

— Horace Venable, *The Power of Rumor*

The first joint action taken by the Deathlords upon their assumption of absolute power consisted of a massive program to rebuild the shattered communications system between the Shadowlands and Stygia. Huge gangs of thralls repaired the roadways and rail connections which had fallen into disarray after the Fifth Maelstrom. Although the shipment of souls between the Necropoli and Stygia had never come to a complete halt, the damage caused by raids from Spectres and sabotage by Renegades had severely restricted travel in many areas of the Shadowlands. This problem was speedily remedied.

The ramifications of this single decision extended beyond the obvious logistical benefits. The message went forth that Stygia still thrived and still sought to maintain contact with the Necropoli. In addition, the Deathlords found a way to relieve Stygia of some of her overcrowding and make use of her stagnating resources. Press gangs of Legionnaires captured many wraiths who had no obvious allegiances or occupations and herded them into the work crews which went out from Stygia into the Tempest to rebuild the roads. The emphasis on expediting mercantile traffic announced to both Stygia and the Shadowlands that the Deathlords' primary concerns lay not with reimposing direct rule but in propagating trade and boosting the economy of the Underworld.

— Jason Dunworth, *Economy and Power in Stygia*



The Present

The events of the last fifteen years have proven difficult to assimilate, for technically they are not yet "history." Still, some assessments are possible, although they must be seen as only temporary theories. But then, history is merely a succession of temporary theories that have become accepted as fact through the accumulated weight of time.

— Thucydides the Younger, *The Procession of the Ages*

To view the Hierarchy as it was in its beginnings and as it is today is to behold a masterful blend of tradition and adaptation. That our government still survives owes much to the vision of Charon, a man who believed in the virtue of change, but it also speaks well of the strength inherent within the structure itself. The classical virtues of Greece, the discipline of Rome, the loyalty of the feudal kingdoms, the expanding horizons of the ages of exploration and empire, the ingenuity and industrial spirit of the Victorian era, and the technological progressiveness of the 20th century have worked together to shape the government of the Underworld. Yet our essential nature has never wavered from our original purpose — to bring order to the chaos of the Underworld so that souls would not be lost to Oblivion.

Mortal society, in fact, has quite a way to go before it matches the efficiency of the Hierarchy. There is no poverty. Disease is a thing of the Skinlands. Any wraith, regardless of race or gender, has an equal chance of advancement. And every citizen contributes something, aids his or her neighbors in some way, even if all they can manage is to serve as a weapon or cornerstone. We have purpose, order, and safety, and they are guaranteed concepts, not just empty promises.

Since our inception, we of the Hierarchy have benefited from the sense of continuity provided by our older members. In addition to the Deathlords, many senior officials in Stygia have served as advisors and counselors for well over a thousand years. Their wisdom and prudence have ensured the gradual absorption of new ideas into the Hierarchy. The constant recruitment of new souls has also served to strengthen our government by providing valuable information and suggestions brought from the Skinlands. It is this age-old wisdom, coupled with its youthful vitality, that has kept the Hierarchy powerful and relevant.

— *Annals of the Dead*

The Dance of Death

Regardless of how much they learn, how much progress they make, mortals just can't keep themselves from dying. In 1980, the World Health Organization announced the eradication of smallpox; in 1981, scientists identified AIDS. Tuberculosis, once thought confined to the annals of medical history, is making a comeback in the 1990s. On the political front, the reunification of Germany, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the official end of apartheid in South Africa greatly reduced old Cold War tensions. As if in retaliation, however, a constant procession of wars and rebellions has created a new set of political hotspots. The 1980s hosted wars in Afghanistan, Central America, and Lebanon. This current decade has already seen Operation Desert Storm, the massacre in Tiananmen Square, civil war in Eastern Europe, and massive nationalist uprisings in what was once the Soviet Union. Terrorism has become the favorite means of self-expression among the politically and socially dissatisfied. Widespread drought has led to famine in many parts of the world (most of them under the charge of the Dark Kingdoms), while tornadoes, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods and other natural disasters vie with airline crashes, building collapses, and traffic fatalities in the race to see whether nature or technology can deliver more souls to the Underworld.

— Ludmilla Hoffstein, *Echoes Across the Shroud*

The electron highway has closed the information gap between the Shadowlands and the Skinlands. It used to take decades before scientific and political developments in the mortal world produced an impact beyond the Shroud. We had to wait for people to die or else for technorelics to appear in the Shadowlands before our specialists could take advantage of new ideas and technologies. Now we acquire information as it develops. Skinriding is the informational equivalent of snail mail. Instant access is the order of the day.

— Downloader@arcanos.net (from the collected postings of the Online Legions)

Look around you. Where is the real Hierarchy? Locked away in Stygia along with the attitudes and mores of the dinosaurs? Scattered throughout the Shadowlands, where Anacreons assert their own forms of despotism and petty tyranny in the face of Stygia's sublime indifference? Some say that Spectres, disguised as the Deathlords, have taken control of the Underworld. Others say that the Deathlords have long since been consumed by their Shadows and have made the once-mighty government of Stygia into a tool whereby they can inflict our souls with endlessly new torments and frustrations. Regardless of the truth of the matter, it is plain that the Hierarchy only continues to exist because no one has bothered to inform it of its demise. The government of Charon passed into Oblivion, along with



its leader, more than three decades ago. What is left is a travesty — a collection of self-serving bureaucrats in the Shadowlands and an elite economic cartel which calls itself the Ruling Council in Stygia. The Code of Charon exists only as a list of rules to mark off, one by one, as they are broken.

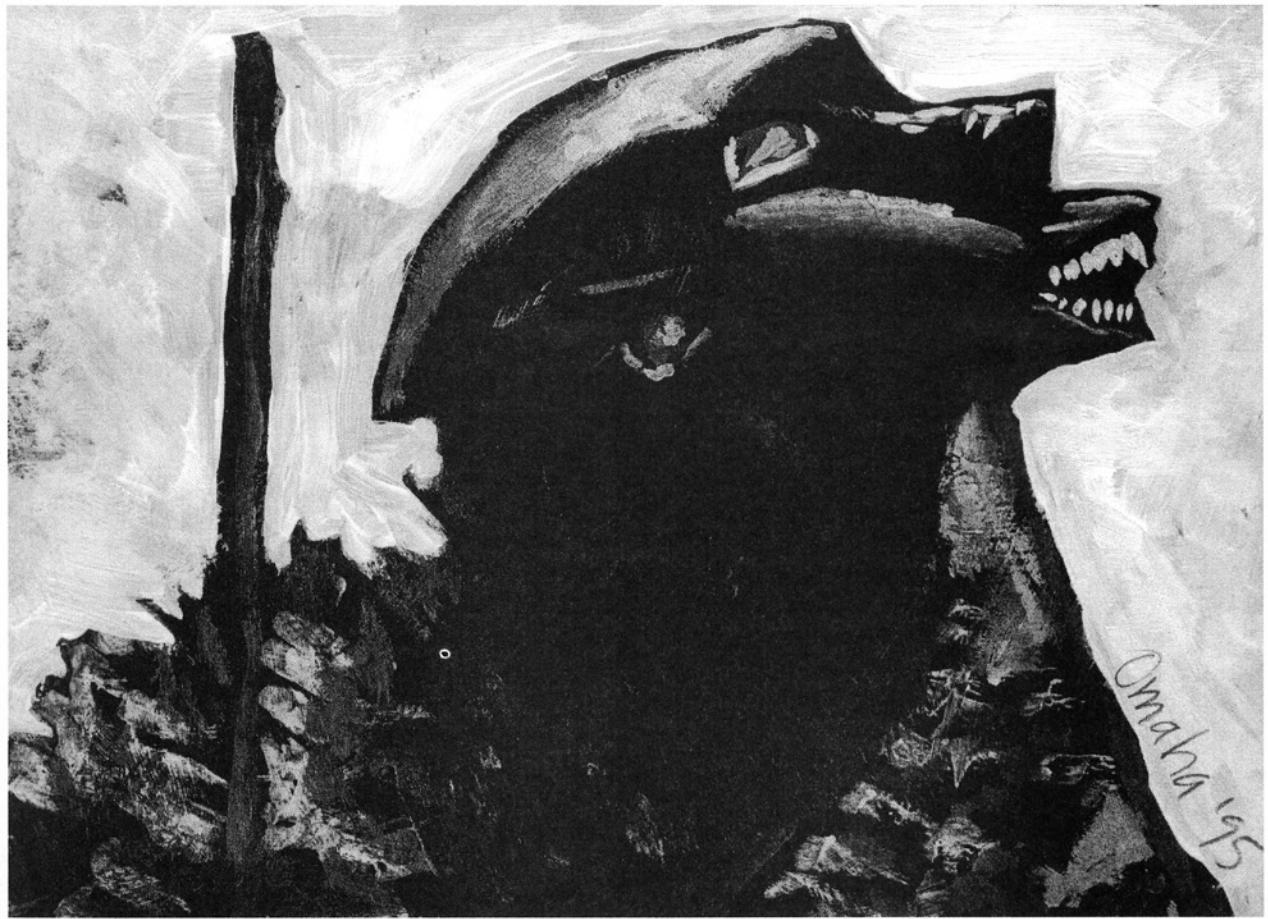
You have called me a Renegade, a Heretic, even a Spectre, for publicly voicing my opinions in the streets of the Necropoli and in the marketplaces of Stygia. Your Legions have pursued me through the byways of the Tempest and into the Skinlands, where I have often had to flee to escape capture. One day, perhaps, you will corner me and deliver me, bound with the strongest chains you possess, to the tortures of the Inquisition and the fires of your tame Artificers. When that happens, my voice will still cry out against the betrayal of a vision. And mine will not be the only voice. Others who have heard my words and read my writings will rip away the cauls of deception and illusion that blind them to the truth. The Hierarchy has abandoned the goals it once held so inviolable. Yet it is not beyond redemption.

Oblivion draws closer with each passing of the tides along the Sunless Sea, and only the Hierarchy still possesses the resources to keep it at bay. I have not abandoned the Hierarchy, but I will not be a silent witness to its excesses. I believe in the great purpose once espoused by the Legions of the Dead. So long as I am able, I will persist in calling for a return to our beginnings, a purification of our purpose, and a rededication of our collective wills. My goal is not to destroy the Hierarchy — for I still serve it though it has condemned me as a traitor — but to change it from within, to restore it to its rightful role as the shepherd of the souls of the dead and the sentinel against the forces of Oblivion.

— “Cassandra” (from pamphlet nailed to the door of the Great Library of Stygia)

Hey, Cassandra, I don't know if you're online, but I figure someone as “enlightened” as you ought to be getting Electron Highway info from someplace. We've posted your latest work as sort of a textbook example of a flame.

Yeah, the Legions have been chasing you every time you jump on your relic soapbox. Well, what do you expect, lady? There's constructive criticism and then there's psycho-freakish ranting. Let's just take a look at that pamphlet and see where you stand, shall we? Hmm... nope, sorry, I don't see any helpful suggestions. All negative, no positive. You're an educated wraith, and seems like you've been around for a while. But hell, it beats me how you can still say you stand for the Hierarchy when you can't be bothered to mention a single worthwhile thing it does. Me, I'm a Hierarchy wraith, and I know it. Means I figure the system's worth giving a damn about. I ain't sure where you really stand, but feel free to e-mail me. I love a good discussion.



Oh, and anybody else who's listening, have a good look at the pamphlet. It's a neat piece of rhetoric, but there's no reason you should waste perfectly good bandwidth saving this kind of diatribe for later.

— Gawain@siege.perilous.net (from the collected postings of the Online Legions)

Final Words

It is my hope that your perusal of these volumes and scrolls has advanced your quest for knowledge. I see that some of what you have read disturbs you. Your curiosity also appears piqued. Good. Perhaps you will return another time to continue your research into the history of this land beyond the Shroud. The search for truth is never-ending, but in the end, you must decide for yourself what is true and what is false. I assure you, it is not as simple as

it seems. Each and every last book within these walls captures the voice of a person like you or me — and we are certainly not infallible, are we?

One word of caution: the Hierarchy has placed great trust in you by allowing you access to the entire library. You will have to be careful to keep the extent of your knowledge from those elements who would do anything to possess it.

Reject it or accept it, the Hierarchy still rules both in Stygia and in the Shadowlands. Its vision, Charon's vision, still shapes Restless society as we know it. Consider what you have read, what you have experienced, and what you have yet to discover. Go now from these archives of the past and venture forth into the present, armed with the knowledge you have acquired. Oh — please return the keys to the vault before you leave.

— Hypatia



Culture: Inside the Hierarchy

Only the City lay silently around her; only the river flowed below, and the stars flickered above, and in the houses lights shone... A kind of pale October day had dawned and the lights in the apparent houses had gone out; and then it had once more grown dark and they had shone — and so on — twenty or thirty times. There had been no sun. During the day she saw the River and the City; during the night, the stars. Nothing else.

— Charles Williams, *All Hallows Eve*

Stygia — Heart of the Hierarchy

The great city that lies at the convergence of the Sea of Souls and the Sunless Sea rests deep within the Tempest, connected to the Shadowlands by a vast network of roads, rails, and rivers. Called the City of Chains, the City of Souls, the City of Dark Echoes or, simply, the City of the Dead, Stygia — more than anything else — symbolizes the might of the Hierarchy in the lands of the dead. Everything about her, from the Onyx Tower, built from the stuff of souls and the dark metals mined from the depths of the Labyrinth, to the crowded lower warrens swarming with stranded souls, bears witness to both the grandeur and the squalor which characterize the best and worst qualities of the Underworld's largest and most powerful element.

The City

Originally situated atop the Isle of Sorrows, Stygia has since outgrown its island confines and now encompasses the lands along the shoreline of the Sunless Sea. Despite its expansion, most Stygians consider the original boundaries of the city to be the "real" Stygia; the rest is just hinterlands and urban sprawl.

In building Stygia, Charon's original intent was to erect an eternal city in the image of the great lost cities of the world, as well as the current era's metropolitan masterpiece — the magnificent city of Rome. Symmetry and beauty were his guiding principles. In the wake of the First Great Maelstrom, defense also became a priority. The rebuilding of Stygia necessitated by the ravages of the Maelstrom reflected the need to provide strong fortifications, even if this diminished to some extent the city's aesthetic appearance. Subsequent problems with overcrowding made additional demands on the structural development of Stygia, and the reality grew even further away from the ideal.



Despite the deviations from its original plan, Stygia still contains many buildings and areas which reflect the ideals of its founder. These structures stand in stark contrast to the surrounding squalor and serve as reminders of a purpose some feel has now been abandoned.

• **The Onyx Tower** — This jutting spire of polished onyx rises up from the center of the city. Once it was Charon's own palace and contained many treasures, which Charon had gathered in order to preserve them from the ravages of the mortal world.

• **The Hall of the Counselors** — Originally designed to be the meeting place for Charon's Senate, this massive building resembles its Roman counterpart. Also called the Great Council Hall, it is used for the official sessions of the Deathlords.

• **The Great Library of Stygia** — This graceful edifice not only resembles the Great Library of Ptolemy I — once the symbol of the city of Alexandria's devotion to learning — it is in fact the same structure. Its shaded halls surround an open courtyard, and the building radiates an aura of sanctuary that stands distinct from the raging tumult beyond its walls.

• **The Colosseum** — In vivid contrast to the serenity of the Great Library, this massive stone amphitheater serves as the site for many public displays — from raucous and violent gladiatorial spectacles to public demonstrations of the Hierarchy's justice.

• **The Agora** — Stygia has numerous markets where artisans can ply their trades and which support the economic life of the city, but the Agora — located near the Onyx Tower in the center of the city — occupies a special position in Stygia's affairs. The open space, demarcated by slender pillars and an ornate statuary, has become a gathering place where the citizens of Stygia can exchange information, barter goods or services, or rest from their labors. Although the thrall trade is usually conducted in the smaller marketplaces, a dealer in thralls will occasionally bring some prime specimens to the Agora in hopes of getting top price from Stygia's wealthier residents.

• **Temples of the Shining Ones** — Near the docks which front upon the Sunless Sea stands a series of darkened, scorched buildings, formerly the temples constructed by the Shining Ones to hold wraiths destined to travel to the Far Shores. Though diminished in their glory through centuries of disuse, and partially destroyed by the fires of Charon's anger, these abandoned structures lend an exotic and desolate elegance to the city's shoreline.

• **Palaces of the Deathlords** — With the possible exception of the Onyx Tower, the palaces of the seven Deathlords occupy the most prestigious sites within Stygia. Each palace, with its surrounding grounds, forms a "realm" of its own and each Deathlord holds absolute power over what goes on within its confines.

In addition to these few pieces of old Stygia, the city contains many other buildings — some of them dating back to the time of its founding, others denoting through style or function a later construction. Now the avenues of Stygia are lined with guild houses (converted for use by the Legions), Legion headquarters, private dwellings and a plethora of other administrative buildings and structures of indeterminate purpose. The passing centuries have left their marks upon the city's architecture, often to the detriment of its once "classical" character. In the last hundred years, dark skyscrapers have risen to pierce the skyline, arrogantly defying physical boundaries, while squat factories, overwhelming in their ugliness, have spread out to cover whole blocks. The foundries in which thralls are rendered into valuable soulplasm and the forges where the metals of the Underworld are worked into Stygian steel occupy their own sector within the city, but the winds that blow through the land of the dead still carry with them the stench and oily smoke from the belching furnaces.

Outside the city itself, across the massive iron bridges that connect the Isle of Sorrows to the mainland, vast warehouses serve as storehouses for the masses of thralls that arrive by road and rail from the Shadowlands. Railyards and railway terminals mark the end of the rail lines and provide an easy means for the transferring of tribute to Stygia and the loading of goods bound for the Necropoli.

The Politics

*I want to know who the men in the shadows are
I want to hear somebody asking them why
They can be counted on to tell us who our enemies are
But they're never the ones to fight or to die*
— Jackson Browne, "Lives in the Balance"

Any government, no matter how solid a front it presents to outsiders, will inevitably be torn by competing factions among its ranks. Within the Hierarchy, the struggle for ascendancy and power has always occupied much of the energy of its rulers. Only Charon's unrivaled power prevented major eruptions of internal conflict, though even he had to contend with opposition from Renegades, Heretics, the guilds and his own Ferrymen. Since Charon's disappearance, the controls he held over the Deathlords have shattered. Battles for power among the seven joint rulers of Stygia have led to a state of secret war within the city itself and open conflict in the outer regions of the Shadowlands and the Necropoli.



The Deathlords

Charon originally delegated power to his closest advisors, wraiths whose judgment he trusted and whose counsel he respected, in order to simplify the process of conducting souls through the Underworld to their destined afterlives. Each Deathlord (as they came to be called) was given jurisdiction over certain groups of souls, divided according to the manner of their death. Charon's reasoning was that in order to resolve the conditions that kept them stranded in the Underworld, the souls of the Restless Dead needed to confront the circumstances of their deaths and reconcile themselves to their fate.

Each Deathlord, therefore, had a focus around which to base the necessary rituals and practices of purification for the wraiths under their protection. In the beginning, the numbers of wraiths were small enough to warrant personal attention from the Deathlords. As the centuries passed, however, and more and more wraiths died with their ties to the mortal world unresolved, the Deathlords were forced to delegate their tasks to their own underlings. As a result, the Deathlords grew further distant from their original purpose.

When Charon's Proclamation of Reason outlawed the Heretics and declared, in effect, that Transcendence was a myth, there seemed little reason for the continued attempts to purify the souls of wraiths stranded in the Underworld. The Deathlords' reasons for amassing wraiths altered drastically. Instead of furthering their passage to the afterlife or helping them Transcend, the Deathlords began to look upon wraiths as tools to use as troops and labor or as fodder for the Artificers' fires. The Deathlords who controlled the greatest numbers of wraiths, therefore, had access to the greatest share of resources in the Underworld.

The realms of the Deathlords, including their palaces and grounds, once reflected the nature of the transformational journey intended to cleanse each soul who entered of the spiritual onus brought upon them by the manner of their death. Originally intended to serve as sites for meditation and purification, they were designed to force wraiths to confront and resolve the circumstances of their passage from the living world. Now they serve as standing monuments to the mastery and power wielded by those once designated by Charon as Most Revered Servants of the Dead.

The Seven Realms of Death

•The Seat of Silence

The palace of the Quiet Lord, who oversees the victims of despair, appears as a collection of weeping spires. Within, its walls absorb all sounds of weeping and anguish. Here, those victims of their own despair, suicides and martyrs alike, release their sorrow and desolation until their reserves are spent and they are engulfed in quiet. With the silence comes healing and acceptance.

•The Seat of Golden Tears

The palace of the Beggar Lord, who claims all those who die through mysterious circumstances or who do not remember the cause of their death, has been described as a maze, a funhouse, an impossibility and an eyesore. The wraiths who belong to the Beggar Lord may never solve the mystery of their demise, just as they may never truly fathom the nature of their Lord's domain. Their task is to reconcile themselves to the knowledge that there are some things they may never know. Once a wraith admits defeat, she is able to embrace the mystery of her death and put it behind her.

•The Seat of Thorns

The thorns which seem to surround the palace of the Emerald Lord, whose followers are comprised of the victims of chance occurrences, obscure the structure that lies within. According to some rumors, the Emerald Lord shaped his palace from a single monstrous emerald found in the mines beneath Stygia. Others say that the palace is a many-faceted structure in which its inhabitants encounter constant surprises and ever-changing surroundings. Like their counterparts in the Seat of Golden Tears, the wraiths who die from accidents, earthquakes and other unforeseen or uncontrollable circumstances must accept the certainty that nothing is certain. Only then will they be freed from the burden of their deaths.

•The Seat of Burning Waters

The castle of the Smiling Lord, ruler of the victims of violence, confronts those who enter with images of blood and steel. It resembles nothing so much as a grim fortress, within which all manner of unspeakable deeds are sanctioned. Those wraiths who find their way to this dread place learn to confront the violence within themselves as well as the violence which brought about their deaths.

•The Seat of Shadows

The palace of the Ashen Lady cycles through a thousand changes with the passing of each tide along the shores of the Sunless Sea. In the Stygian equivalent of morning it appears bright and new, as if it were built only yesterday. By evening, its façade has faded and deteriorated until it seems fit only for the wrecking ball. Within, it is said, the rooms and furnishings undergo a similar transformation. From this never-ending cycle, the souls who died from the pressing weight of their years learn to accept the fact that all things must ultimately wither and die.

•The Seat of Succor

The Laughing Lady oversees her charges from within a stronghold that looms, prisonlike, over its surroundings. Within, however, it is a haven where wraiths whose deaths resulted from madness — their own or someone else's — come to terms with the source of madness itself. No one is quite certain how this is accomplished or whether any who have entered the Laughing Lady's realm have ever found what they seek, but all who pass within earshot of the Seat of Succor testify to the constant sound of laughter that resonates from the palace walls — a sound that is often difficult to distinguish from weeping.

•The Seat of Dust

The Skeletal Lord's palace houses the victims of pestilence and famine within a bone-white edifice, the fragile exterior of which belies the sturdiness of the actual structure. Though no longer physically wracked by the ravages of disease and hunger, the souls within seek, nevertheless, to find a reason for their apparently meaningless deaths. Lacking that, they struggle to accept their fate.

•The Seat of Fate

Unlike the Deathlords, the Lady of Fate does not reside within Stygia itself. Charon reputedly offered her the Isle of Eurydice in return for her many favors to him in the time before time. The Legions of Fate, however, maintain a small but elegantly simple structure within Stygia, which serves as a waiting place for wraiths who arrive in the Underworld bearing upon them the mark of Fate. It is unknown whether these souls have anything to resolve.

— Paul Auguste Munier, *An Impressionist's Eye*

Interactions between Deathlords

Since his disappearance, Charon's method of apportioning souls to the Deathlords' charge has come under question. While the Lords who oversee the victims of violence and pestilence (which includes famine) never lack for souls, the other Deathlords are forced to depend upon the vagaries of chance to bring them victims. In particular, the Ashen Lady is reported to have complained that the extension of the average human lifespan has made it more difficult for her to harvest the number of souls to which she is entitled. The Skeletal Lord also argued that his share of souls has lessened due to the advances made in medical research. The notorious trials of the First Consuls of War and Pestilence, though they may have been grounded in fact, can also be seen as an attempt on the part of some of the Deathlords to bring down the two most powerful of their company.

Disputes of this nature occupy the attention of the Deathlords almost to the complete exclusion of all other matters. Since Stygia's separation from the Shadowlands, the quarrels among its leaders have taken on an esoteric quality, a reflection of their distancing from the realities of the Underworld. The Deathlords themselves rarely leave the confines of their palaces, so most of the intrigue occurs among their minions. Each Deathlord has a household staff of trusted servants and employees who oversee the actual management of the Legions.

The Legions, too, reflect the changing loyalties of their Deathlord commanders; each day they wait anxiously for their orders so that they may discover who their current allies and enemies are. As a result, it is difficult to maintain friendships across Legion lines in Stygia. Most Legionnaires are warned not to fraternize with their counterparts in other Legions.

The Legions of Stygia

Contrary to popular belief, the members of the Penitent Legions are not all mad, nor are the wraiths who form the ranks of the Legions of the Grim uniformly prone to violence. The variety of individuals to be found within each Deathlord's Legions illustrates the reality that death comes equally to those of all classes, temperaments and abilities. It is possible, however, to make a few generalizations about the character of each Legion.

•The Silent Legion — Most, though not all, of the members of this legion were responsible for their own deaths. Suicide, at least in the Western world, represents the epitome of despair. It is the ultimate negation of the will to live, a final acknowledgment that the future holds no promise of hope. Even within this seemingly narrow category, there are a number of variations. Some mortals commit suicide after a sudden shock or loss, such as the investors who launched themselves from the windows of their skyscraper offices following the stock market crash of 1929. Others turn to suicide as a last resort, following a series of failures in love, career or social status. Victims of prolonged terminal illnesses sometimes choose to end their lives prematurely rather than suffer the agony or loss of control that will accompany the final stages of their disease.

Martyrs may fall under the aegis of the Quiet Lord as well, particularly if their deaths were — like that of Socrates — self-inflicted. By choosing to die, these martyrs voiced a cry of despair in which lay the hope that their deaths would succeed in effecting some future change.

Once ensconced in their wraithly existence, the members of the Silent Legion represent a broad spectrum of personality types, from the stereotypical chronic depressive to the otherwise normal individual who, overcome by inner pain, swallowed the barrel of a gun.

• **The Legion of Paupers** — Although some wraiths do not know the causes of their deaths, this Legion also serves as a catch-all for many wraiths whose deaths would otherwise qualify them for membership in more than one Legion. In addition to the individual who drops dead for no apparent reason, members of the Legion of Paupers also include victims who die of heart attacks in the course of a mugging which may or may not have proven fatal on its own, or hospital patients denied vital medications due to a power loss caused by an earthquake. It is said that the Beggar Lord got his title because he had to “beg” his souls from the other Deathlords.

Victims of certain diseases, such as progeria, which causes rapid aging of the body to such a degree that young children can die of “old age,” may sometimes fall to the Beggar Lord rather than the Skeletal Lord or Ashen Lady. In the same fashion, individuals who kill themselves rather than face death by starvation or torture often default to the Legion of Paupers instead of the Legions of the Skeletal or Smiling Lord, even sometimes to the exclusion of the Quiet Lord. The members of this Legion, therefore, represent the widest range of different types, brought together only by the commonality of confusion.

• **The Emerald Legion** — Anyone can fall prey to accidental death or natural disasters, so the members of the Emerald Legion come from all walks of life. Earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, fires and other “acts of God” take no notice of an individual’s temperament or qualifications. Neither do drunken drivers choose their victims by career path, age, physique or gender. Nevertheless, the Emerald Legion does include in its ranks a greater proportion of reckless or merely clumsy individuals.

Because the nature of many disasters is such that whole families and sometimes entire towns perish, the Emerald Legion often has to cope with hordes of wraiths who have few or no Fetters. It is said that the Legions of the Emerald Lord often carry spare Fetters with them to award to potential recruits. How they get these Fetters is a matter of wide speculation, and the issue has earned the Legion a somewhat dubious reputation.

• **The Legions of the Grim** — Despite their warlike reputation, the members of this Legion do not come entirely from the ranks of warriors, nor are they necessarily violent in temperament. Those killed by violence are not always violent themselves; more often they are innocent murder victims or civilian casualties of war. Nevertheless, this Legion is known for its frequent infighting. Oftentimes opponents in battle will arrive in the Underworld simultaneously and, if claimed by the same Reaper, will continue to fight until forcibly separated. In some instances, particularly in the days when the work of the Legions was solely focused on assisting wraiths to resolve their unfinished business, a murderer who died violently would find himself in the same Cohort as his victim.

Although the frequent outbreaks of warfare in the Skinlands contribute a significant proportion of military servicepeople to the Grim Legion, its membership is just as varied as that of any other Legion. Alongside seasoned war veterans and raw recruits killed in their first battle, one finds elderly victims of vicious stabbings and the victims of serial killers and gang-related violence, as well as individuals whose deaths are attributed to crimes of passion. The Smiling Lord’s Legions often attempt to lay claim to those persons who kill themselves in a violent fashion, declaring that violence — not despair — more accurately describes their mode of departure from the world of the living.

• **The Iron Legion** — There are always those individuals who, despite having lived a full life, still lack a sense of fulfillment or are unwilling to let go of their families or their fortunes at the time of their deaths. In centuries past, most people reached old age and died while in their 40s; the advances of the current era, however, have brought about a tremendous increase in the average lifespan. This has had a significant impact on the nature of those who come at last under the control of the Ashen Lady and her Iron Legion. Although new breakthroughs in medicine and technology have made it possible for more people to live to a venerable old age, the chances for one’s meeting an early death have also increased; thus it is still likely that someone with the potential to live for 70 years would meet their demise much sooner.

It is commonly believed that the ranks of the Iron Legion contain only the doddering or the senile. This is far from the case. Many of its members were gifted with uncommon good health or keen mental faculties throughout their long lives; many lived so long because they were too stubborn to die. In general, most of the individuals who serve the Ashen Lady demonstrate a wisdom and tolerance born from their lengthy stay in the Skinlands. A number of these elderly wraiths also bring a lifetime’s worth of skills and talents to their Legion. It is, however, an unfortunate commentary on the tyranny of youth that many members of the Iron Legion seek out Masquers at the earliest opportunity, in order to alter their appearance and regain their youthful image.

• **The Penitent Legion** — Madness often leads to death, but more often the members of the Penitent Legion come from the ranks of those individuals who fall prey to psychopaths, serial killers, drug-crazed murderers or seriously disturbed parents or spouses. Many argue that individuals killed in wars and victims of terrorist actions and government-sanctioned genocide rightfully belong in the Penitent Legion, since their deaths resulted from political madness.

Included in this group as well are victims of degenerative mental diseases such as Alzheimer’s and those who die in institutions through neglect or lack of adequate treatment. The Penitent Legion claims jurisdiction over many

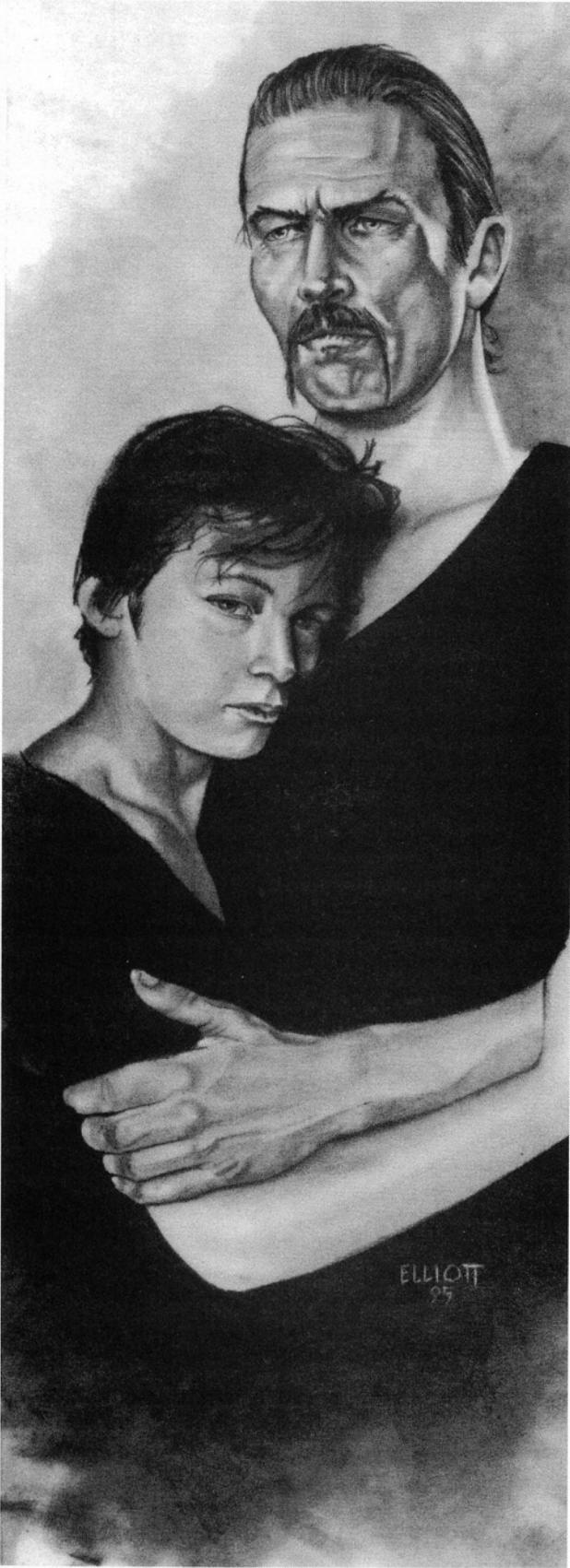
individuals whose deaths were indirectly caused by madness. Some have characterized the membership of the Penitent Legions as a collection of wraiths who are either very, very mad or very, very sane.

• **The Gaunt Legion** — Next to violence, disease and famine probably claim the largest share of souls in the Underworld. In the past, the frequency and longevity of plagues often caused the wraiths in the Gaunt Legions to outnumber those in the Legions of the Grim. As scientists discovered cures for more and more diseases and preventive medicine lessened the impact of many others, the Gaunt Legions began to worry that their numbers would no longer keep pace with the victims of violence. Rumors that agents of the Skeletal Lord have attempted to delay or prevent the discovery of cures for certain diseases circulate widely throughout the Underworld, but so far no proof of this has ever come to light.

Victims of famine and drought also fall under the influence of the Skeletal Lord. In the modern world, hunger has reached epidemic proportions. With few exceptions, however, most of the wraiths who die of starvation belong to the Dark Kingdoms. This has long been a bone of contention between the Skeletal Lord and the Ruling Council. The Gaunt Legion is suspected of ignoring the agreement with the Dark Kingdoms in a desperate pitch to gain more souls. It should be noted that starvation and malnutrition are not exclusively the province of the Dark Kingdoms, and that the Gaunt Legions contain victims of Stalin's induced famine and other war-related starvation as well as individuals who continue to die of malnourishment in the rural South and other areas of rural poverty in the Western world.

• **The Legions of Fate** — Unlike the other Legions, those wraiths destined for the Legions of Fate do not share a common cause of death. All these wraiths have to qualify them for service to the Lady of Fate is the fact that, for some reason, they bear her mark when they enter the Underworld. It is impossible for outsiders to characterize the members of this enigmatic Legion in any way, although it is almost certain that the Lady of Fate and her handmaidens have some idea of the purpose for which each wraith so marked is destined.





The Civil Hierarchy

The art of government differs from the art of campaigning, and the Hierarchy in both Stygia and the Shadowlands has evolved a parallel administrative structure which focuses on the vital — though often underappreciated — tasks of civil management and record-keeping. When the need for non-military personnel became clear, shortly after the formation of the Republic of Stygia, Charon's advisors cautioned him against the danger of setting up a "second Hierarchy" that might one day seek to outmaneuver its parent organization. To emphasize their incorporation into a single governing body, they were accorded honorary military titles as well as administrative ranks or grades. The civil servants of the Hierarchy are, therefore, considered "reserves" and, as such, can be drafted into the Legions in the event of a military emergency. Most of these civil servants perform reserve duty not unlike that of the National Guard in the Skinlands, spending one weekend of every month in serving training, and are prepared to be called up at a moment's notice. This has led to friction between the "weekend warriors" and career soldiers who serve alongside these reserves, who, in their estimation, don't know which is the dangerous end of darksteel.

Advancement from one civilian rank to the next requires a combination of skilled performance, personal drive and the right connections. Transfers between civilian and military branches of the Hierarchy are not uncommon. The lower echelons of the active Legions contain a fair share of bored civil servants, while some burned-out or shell-shocked Legionnaires temporarily seek out the relative safety of a desk job.

Clerks form the lowest rung on the administrative ladder; these beginning civil servants perform the routine but vital tasks which make up the bulk of government work. They also act as "gofers" to anyone of a higher rank. Clerks need to be literate and have at least some education, for they must learn the byzantine convolutions of Hierarchy economics. They hold the honorary rank of Legionnaire.

Adjusters not only supervise the activities of several clerks, they also serve as staff aides to higher-ranking officials. They hold most of the "middle-management" posts in Stygia and the Shadowlands, and while they do not themselves wield enormous amounts of power, they have access to individuals who do. They hold the honorary rank of Centurion.

Inspectors are in charge of administering a particular area around a Citadel (in the Shadowlands) or a specialized sub-department of the government (in Stygia). They work closely with the Legions' Marshals, and cooperation between the two parallel ranks is crucial to ensure that things run smoothly. Crossover between the civil and the military wings of the Hierarchy is fairly common at this level. Inspectors hold the honorary rank of Marshal.



Ministers in Stygia serve as department heads and oversee the work of the Inspectors within their department. In the Shadowlands, they are in charge of the economy, the entry and egress of wraiths, and the collection of information in the Haunts around the perimeter of a Citadel. In both Stygia and the Shadowlands, they often employ Adjusters (and occasionally Centurions) to act as their spies and informants, since their "need to know" is vital to the performance of their duties. This position is a training ground for the arcane politics of the higher ranks of the Hierarchy. Many Ministers use their positions to instill a healthy dose of fear in their underlings, with the design to improve the efficiency of their work. Ministers hold the honorary rank of Regent.

Chancellors are the administrative equivalent of Overlords. In Stygia they serve as assistants and advisors to the Deathlords, and are among the few wraiths who are actually admitted into the presence of these enigmatic Underworld leaders. In the Shadowlands, Chancellors act as advisors (along with Overlords) to the Anacreon of a Citadel. They are responsible for the everyday operation and management of a Citadel and oversee all shipments to and from Stygia. Chancellors hold the honorary rank of Overlord.

In Stygia, Chancellors form the uppermost echelon of the Hierarchy's civil administration. In the Shadowlands, however, competent Chancellors occasionally attain the coveted position of Anacreon. Many ambitious Stygian Chancellors request transfers to the Shadowlands in search of this administrative plum. Occasionally, the Deathlords will send a Chancellor from Stygia to fill the post of Anacreon in a particularly troublesome Necropolis.

The Stygian "Lifestyle"

The society of Stygia is made up of some of the oldest and most powerful wraiths in the Underworld. Here the seven Deathlords have their dwellings and hold their secret councils. Here the Domem, elder wraiths whose Fetters have not survived the passage of time and circumstances, reside within the shelter provided by the City of Steel and Souls. Here, too, in the glowing fires of Kyklops and the forges of the Artificers, the constant parade of weak and Fetterless thralls reaches its final destination.

Severed from its connections to the Skinlands during the late Middle Ages, Stygia's society has changed little from that time. Although a few modern innovations have been incorporated into some aspects of Stygian culture, such as architecture, weaponry and mass production technologies, Stygian thought and mores remain locked in a past based largely on the Roman Empire and medieval Europe. Denied access to the vicarious pleasures and entertainments afforded wraiths who dwell in close proximity to the Skinlands, Stygian wraiths have found other ways to occupy their time.

Work

The Legions of Stygia take their business very seriously. Not far from the gates of Stygia lies the Venous Stair, a vast opening into the Labyrinth which serves not only as a reservoir of the precious ores which go into the forging of Stygian steel but also as a link with the Tempest. Stygian patrols are constantly busy providing safe access to the resources of the Venous Stair while simultaneously preventing its use by hordes of invading Spectres.

Although the guilds have ceased to exist as independent entities, many previous guild members have been assimilated into the Hierarchy and now ply their skills under direct Stygian supervision. Nhudri and the Artificers who work with him spend long hours at the arduous tasks of creating marketable goods, oboli and other useful items out of the stuff of soulplasm. The elite of Stygia, desiring custom alterations of their Corpus for cosmetic or utilitarian purposes, place high demands on Masquers' talents. The role of Pardoners in Stygian society cannot be understated, for as members of Stygia's ruling class age and grow in power, so, too, do their Shadows increase in strength. Many Pardoners hold high positions within the Hierarchy and serve as personal counselors to Stygian officials. The Harbingers still serve as messengers, although now they run between the Shadowlands and Stygia or to other, more distant outposts. To interfere with them risks bad luck, more accounting from tradition than from Hierarchy-induced fear. Because of the value and necessity of their service, most Monitors were inducted straight into the Legions after the disbanding of their guild, where they continue to perform their duties of guardianship.

The business of coordinating and administrating Stygian affairs constitutes the work of most Hierarchy wraiths not actively involved in military maneuvers. The bureaucracy of the Hierarchy has its headquarters in Stygia, operating out of a number of massive buildings in the center of the city. The administrative wing of the Hierarchy boasts a proliferation of titles and posts, all of which deal with the day-to-day activities necessary to keep the wheels of government turning at least consistently, if not smoothly. In addition to such tasks as cataloguing and recording the number and disposition of souls entering the city, Stygia employs an army of scribes and archivists whose sole purpose is to ensure the acquisition and preservation of knowledge and the chronicling of the history of the Underworld.

While the heart of Stygia consists of elegant (if somewhat outdated) buildings and stately promenades, other parts of the city show the effects of unrelieved overcrowding. Narrow streets and narrower alleys form maze-like networks of dead ends and cul-de-sacs where only the hardest souls dare to travel in groups of less than five or six. Buildings compete for vertical as well as horizontal space

along these cluttered lanes. Here reside the drop-outs and fringe elements of Stygian society: escaped thralls, deserters from the Legions, a few independent entrepreneurs, illegal visitors to the city and members of guilds that do not enjoy official Hierarchy sanction. Black marketeers in thralls, Fetters and fake deathmarks conduct their illicit business in the underbelly of Stygia in relative safety, although they maintain constant lookouts to warn of approaching Hierarchy patrols. Unsanctioned or outcast guilds, such as the Oracles, Proctors, and gangs of Spooks and Haunts, ply their trades in secrecy, demanding high prices from those who deliberately seek them out. Though few would freely admit to patronizing them, the Usurers and Puppeteers maintain a Hierarchy clientele, along with the now-accessible Heretics and Renegades. Rumors of infiltration by Spectres always result in sweeps of these lower-class parts of the city, but the constant influx of new arrivals provides ready replacements for wraiths unfortunate enough to be caught by a Stygian patrol.

Play

Leisure pursuits in Stygia, like the city itself, bear the stamp of bygone eras. In the Skinlands, before the advent of modern media technology brought information and

entertainment into the home, most individuals relied on their own resources for amusement and relaxation. Since most citizens of Stygia either cannot or will not travel to the Shadowlands, where proximity to the Skinlands affords multiple opportunities for recreation, the cultural life of Stygia has assumed a vigorous, though sometimes jaded and decadent, "life" of its own.

Just as the citizens of Athens and Rome would meet in the agorae to discuss matters of philosophy and politics, so do the elite of Stygia likewise congregate in the marketplaces, museums, libraries and other public buildings to enjoy conversation and debates on history, literature, art and politics or simply to hear the latest gossip trickling down from the households of the Deathlords. Drama, musical performances, poetry recitals, satires and other public entertainments keep the Sandmen and Chanteurs of Stygia supplied with work. Gladiatorial combats which pit specially trained and Moliated thralls against each other or against captive Tempest-beasts bring throngs of wraiths from all classes to the Colosseum. In the lower quarters of Stygia, less prestigious contests of strength and arms draw their share of spectators. Regardless of venue, gambling is always a part of Stygian sport, with oboli, relics, thralls and sometimes Fetters passing through the hands of the bookies and oddsmakers that hawk the crowds.





Other, more furtive amusements take place in back alleys and dark hovels. Prostitution, although officially banned by the Hierarchy, enjoys a brisk business in certain areas of the city — although the procurement of Passions of one sort or another rather than sex is more often the object of desire. Not a few entrepreneurs keep stables of thralls whose sole purpose is to provide paying customers with fixed amounts of Lust, Fear, Pity or Sorrow. (Love is difficult, though not impossible, to acquire in this fashion.) Almost any kind of pleasure, however obscure or decadent, can be obtained somewhere in the depths of the city. Rumors circulate constantly of clandestine visits by one or the other of the Deathlords to some of the supposedly secret torture parlors. Since the rulers of Stygia rarely need to go out for entertainment, these rumors are usually discounted.

The Necropoli - The Other Empire

*When you spend enough time
with a lion, the idea of
roaring becomes more and
more reasonable.*

— from Citizen X



Stygia is the Underworld's heart, the Necropoli form the vital conduits which funnel precious sustenance from the Shadowlands to that ponderously beating organ. Designed to serve as extensions of the Hierarchy's might and to enable the Legions to establish collection centers nearer to the Skinlands, the Necropoli have gained in power and authority since the separation of Stygia from the Shadowlands. Just as Stygian wraiths seldom leave their city except on official and usually temporary business, many Necropolitan wraiths never journey beyond the Shadowlands to the city which claims to rule over the entirety of the Underworld.

Before the disappearance of Charon, the Hierarchy, for the most part, kept close tabs on the activities of the various Necropoli. Failure to deliver shipments of thralls in sufficient quantities, late shipments of tribute or rumors of "trouble in the provinces" usually resulted in the speedy dispatch of Legions or officials from Stygia to remedy the problems. In recent years, however, the erratic nature of the Tempest and the constant threat of attacks from roving bands of Spectres, Renegades or bandits has made travel between Stygia and the Shadowlands less than reliable. Combined with Stygia's growing preoccupation with its own affairs, the Necropoli have been left to their own devices. Only the gravest emergencies, such as a complete

cessation of tribute or a state of outright insurrection, currently elicit direct intervention by Stygia, and even that takes time.

The governments of most Necropoli have evolved into semi-independent entities still bound by loyalty, as well as strong (perhaps stronger) economic and political ties, to Stygia, but otherwise free of direct Stygian rule. The local Council of Anacreons and their Legions, usually made up of wraiths native to the area, constitute their own Hierarchies-in-miniature, and their policies and customs vary from Necropolis to Necropolis.

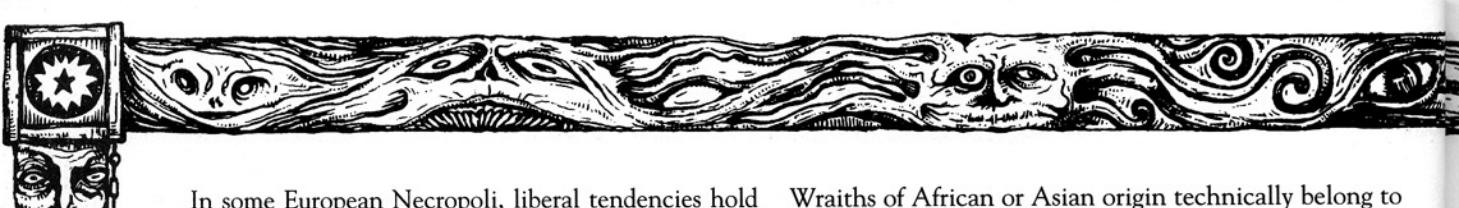
The Cities

Almost every city in the world where Western culture has left its stamp plays unwitting host to a hidden city lurking just beyond the Shroud. Although each Necropolis shares some traits common to all Shadowland-based cities, regional differences make each Necropolis a unique environment for the local wraith population. Factors such as relative distance from Stygia, the "ambiance" of the host-city in the Skinlands, and the physical placement of Haunts within each city contribute to the overall role played by the Hierarchy in any given Necropolis.

Old World Necropoli

By and large, the Necropoli which formed around the cities of Europe, where Charon's Hierarchy established its first Shadowlands outposts and from which most of the older Hierarchy wraiths originated, sustain a more conservative, traditional attitude concerning the politics and social structure of the Underworld. In the Necropoli of Rome, Paris, London, Geneva and other relatively stable European cities, strong ruling councils of Anacreons attempt to mimic the structure of Stygian government. In these cities, the Legions still patrol regularly and receive both respect and obedience from the local wraith population. Attempts to enforce the Code of Charon succeed more often than they fail, and shipments of thralls and other forms of tribute leave those Necropoli at regular intervals.

Despite these general tendencies, the Necropoli of Europe are not interchangeable. In London, for example, the Legions exert firm but polite control over the locals and are more prone to issue "warnings" or verbal reprimands for first offenses than their counterparts in more violence-prone or volatile cities. Parisian Hierarchs devote much of their time to the search for more and more sophisticated forms of amusement and tend to sneer at the plebeian tastes of non-Gallic wraiths. Many Necropoli in Germany place a heavy emphasis on productivity and industry; deliveries of tribute from Stuttgart and Bonn are always punctual, and record-keeping is meticulous.



In some European Necropoli, liberal tendencies hold sway. In Amsterdam and Copenhagen, for instance, the Anacreons have learned to ignore the presence of large numbers of Renegades and unaffiliated wraiths. In return, they receive a certain amount of peaceful cooperation from these potentially troublesome groups. In many Irish Necropoli, persistent Renegade and Heretic sentiments have forced the Hierarchy to either bolster their troop presence or else bow to the inevitable and withdraw to their Citadels. In a number of small villages and hamlets, the Hierarchy maintains only a token presence, usually in the form of a few over-worked patrols that claim to represent their parent Legions.

The Necropoli of the Americas

The Shadowlands corresponding to North, Central and South America were originally colonized by groups of Heretics and Renegades. Latecomers to the "New Worlds," the Hierarchy has had to make allowances for the entrenched attitudes of the wraiths whose mortal ancestors left them a legacy of personal freedom and political independence. In some U.S. and Canadian Necropoli, the idea of democracy has insinuated itself into the fabric of Hierarchy structure, while in South America certain Heretic groups have joined forces with the local Legions to exercise a form of "religious" as well as political control over their citizenry that would appall their militantly secular counterparts in Stygia.

As in Europe, however, the manner in which the Hierarchy exerts its presence (or fails to do so) differs greatly from place to place. Tradition, if nothing else, still carries weight in many New England Necropoli, and in cities like Boston and New Haven, Hierarchy wraiths maintain their authority through the general respect given to seniority and longevity by the local population. New York's Necropolis, on the other hand, sometimes must employ draconian measures just to keep the peace and deal with the exceedingly large number of wraiths who dwell within its borders. In the Necropoli of the southern United States, Anacreons often cloak their power in the trappings of gentility. The Legions of Charleston, Richmond and Mobile are more likely to employ subtle pressures or less subtle threats rather than outright force to maintain order. Appalachian Hierarchs find that the cultivation of a "good ole boy" attitude garners more allegiance from local wraiths than stringent discipline. The Midwestern Necropoli seem to balance conservative attitudes with pragmatic policies, while the Necropoli of the West Coast fall somewhere between the extremes of San Francisco's official policies of toleration and Los Angeles' harsh but erratic displays of Hierarchy muscle.

Another aspect which differentiates New World Necropoli from their European counterparts relates to the significant presence in the Americas of wraiths who fall under the aegis of one or another of the Dark Kingdoms.

Wraiths of African or Asian origin technically belong to the Kingdoms of Ivory and Jade. In some instances, those wraiths elect to remain in familiar territory and swear allegiance to their local Hierarchy representatives. Nevertheless, most Necropoli maintain delegations from the Dark Kingdoms and, in some instances, have even allowed their agents the status of Anacreons.

The Politics

The nature of government and politics in the Shadowlands derives largely from the necessity for expediency and pragmatism. Stygia is too far away from most Necropoli to provide assistance or support (or censure, for that matter), so most Anacreons and their Legions follow the path of least resistance in maintaining their claims to power. Where Stygian politics concentrates on following the rules and keeping form with official policies, the political rulers of the Shadowlands employ a single tried and true axiom: "Whatever works."

In general, however, the Hierarchy's hold over the Necropoli is less than absolute. Particularly in those areas which were originally claimed by Renegades and Heretics, the representatives of Stygia have to contend with large numbers of dissidents and potential troublemakers. Rather than bringing brute force to bear on the populace, most Hierarchy rulers in the Shadowlands are savvy enough to realize that the best they can do is keep a low profile. In response, many wraiths who oppose the Hierarchy or refuse affiliation with it are content to accept such minimal government, realizing that outright rebellion might result in the arrival of troops from Stygia and the imposition of a harsher set of rulers.

The Anacreons

Most Necropoli retain the traditional trappings of Hierarchy control. A Council of Anacreons, one representing each Deathlord and one from the Legion of Fate, oversees the governing of the city. While in theory this structure provides the same sort of consensual control over the Necropoli as does the Council of Deathlords in Stygia, in reality, many Anacreons spend most of their time plotting against one another in hopes of implementing their own private agendas. A few dedicated individuals who have a genuine interest in their work try to motivate their fellow Anacreons to cooperate or simply ignore them in favor of keeping their own administration on track. Unfortunately, these individuals are few indeed and sometimes do not survive the maneuverings of those with less dedication than they. Frequently, the grunt work of managing a Necropolis defaults to those individuals who act as the advisors to the Anacreons. A few Necropoli have begun to experiment with slightly different forms of government.





In Atlanta and several other Necropoli, a Governor oversees the Council of Anacreons, providing a single voice for the Hierarchy. Others, like Cleveland, Stockholm, Barcelona and Seattle, have tried a rotation system in which each Anacreon serves in turn as titular head of the Necropolis for a predetermined length of time. This has met with varying degrees of success, ranging from a complete and peaceful adoption of the system to even more destructive infighting.

The Legions

The Legions of the Shadowlands labor under a set of difficulties not shared by their counterparts in Stygia. In many Necropoli, they are viewed more as occupying forces than as duly constituted home armies. Even in those cities where they do have the support of the majority of the native wraith population, they are often underappreciated and overworked. Most Legions cannot afford the luxury of sorting through all potential recruits in order to claim those wraiths who belong to them by virtue of how they died. The need to keep a balanced representation of all the Legions has led to the institution of random selection or lotteries as alternate methods for acquiring new recruits. In

those Necropoli where attacks by Spectres are common occurrences, the speedy assignment of wraiths to Legions obviates any niceties in determining who belongs where.

Because of this, many Legions based in the Necropoli have a more heterogeneous character than Stygian-based Legions. This makes the armies of the Shadowlands more adaptable in some ways and also promotes friendlier relations across Legion lines. In Necropoli that more often resemble war-zones than urban centers, this boost to cooperation is essential.

The geography of the Shadowlands and the variations in the Shroud frequently result in the formation of Necropoli that resemble a connected series of enclaves. Many Legions in these Necropoli find themselves relegated to such low tasks as running messages and keeping lines of communication open between various widely separated Hierarchy Haunts. These jobs often prevent them from performing actual police work, such as rounding up unregistered wraiths, sniffing out suspected Renegades or pursuing those who violate the Code of Charon. Officially, the Legions turn a blind eye to most activities that do not directly interfere with their regular routines. Keeping the peace by ignoring all but the most blatant lawbreakers has become standard practice in the Shadowlands.

Lifestyles

Unlike Stygia, the Necropoli of the Shadowlands do not suffer from arrested development. The activities of wraiths in the cities near the Skinlands reflect the changing tastes and fads of the mortal world. Attitudes toward both work and play reflect the localized origins of the wraith population as well as the fact that, in general, wraiths who remain in the Shadowlands tend to be younger by several centuries than Stygian wraiths.

Work

Legionnaires spend most of their time on routine patrols either within a Necropolis or along its perimeters. Additionally, some patrols serve as Monitors, keeping watch on affairs on the other side of the Shroud. Although technically, the Legions are responsible for locating and dealing with criminal or outlaw elements within the Necropolis, their priorities lie elsewhere, in the overseeing of shipments of tribute to Stygia and the prevention of attacks on the Necropolis from outside its borders. Administrative personnel in the Necropolis keep busy managing the actual business of the city: seeing that the Legions are adequately equipped, maintaining accurate records of shipments to and from Stygia, and running errands for high-ranking officials.

Although Stygia rarely takes notice of affairs in the Necropoli, the possibility of unannounced visits by Stygian officials serves as an incentive for Hierarchy wraiths in the Shadowlands to maintain the appearance of control over their territories. Occasional surprise inspections of both military and civilian personnel by the Anacrons of a Necropolis ensure that, even in the most relaxed situations, Hierarchy wraiths never entirely forget their duties.

Play

Hierarchy wraiths are as quick as any other residents of the Shadowlands to take advantage of their proximity to the Skinlands. In their leisure hours, most wraiths engage in a variety of vicarious pursuits by looking over the shoulders of mortals in their vicinity. Attending plays, concerts, sporting events or simply watching television occupy large chunks of spare time.

By far, however, the most popular recreational activity in the Shadowlands is skinriding, with Inhabiting inanimate objects such as cars and motorcycles a close second. Although these pursuits are officially banned by the Hierarchy as violations of the Code of Charon, Legionnaires are as guilty as anyone else of indulging in clandestine visits to the Skinlands. Since many Hierarchy wraiths remain in the Shadowlands near their mortal homes, they

often have loved ones just across the Shroud from the Necropoli in which they are based. So long as they are relatively discreet, most attempts to communicate with living friends and relatives are conveniently ignored by Hierarchy officials.

Some Necropolitan leaders even go so far as to unofficially condone and encourage Skinriding, claiming that it gives their Legions practice for those occasions when they must enter the Skinlands in pursuit of Spectres and other enemies.

The Elite



In the early days of the Empire of Stygia, Charon rewarded his bravest and most loyal soldiers by inducting them into a special order of Equitae, the Order of the Sickle. Membership in this elite fighting group constituted a rare privilege and carried with it massive amounts of prestige and more tangible evidences of favor. The Order of the Unlidded Eye, created to be the military arm of the Hierarchy's Inquisition, also imbued its members with an aura that set them apart from common Legionnaires. In the ensuing centuries, additional special groups of Equitae and elite military orders sprang up either to reward past accomplishments or in response to immediate needs. The Fifth Legion, or the Legion of the Black Hawk, brought together veteran soldiers from all the Deathlords' Legions into a single, highly trained group whose sole purpose was to ensure safe settlement of the New World by colonists from the Hierarchy.

The idea of creating special task forces has since grown in popularity. Each Deathlord has at least one such elite group under its control, while several other groups, boasting inter-Legionary memberships, have been established — or have established themselves.

Special Legions of the Deathlords

- **Order of the Avenging Flame** — The Smiling Lord has, over the centuries, amassed a greater number of enemies than any other single Deathlord. To instill a healthy fear in his opposition, whether from among his own minions or from outsiders, he designed the Order of the Avenging Flame. Armed, it is said, with Loyalty Blades attuned to the Smiling Lord, these elite troops serve as his personal bodyguards in Stygia and the instruments of his vengeance in the Shadowlands.

- **Storm Maidens** — This elite group of female Legionnaires serves the Laughing Lady. Referred to by out-

siders as Valkyries or Amazons, these fearless soldiers regularly venture into the Tempest in search of Spectres to fight. Their name comes from their habit of heedlessly charging into the thick of a Maelstrom to do battle with the creatures within. Despite their reckless abandon, fortune seems to favor the Storm Maidens, as they rarely suffer the number of casualties their actions should warrant. They have reputedly perfected the little known Argos ability Tempest Run (see *Sea of Shadows*) for use in battle rather than as an escape from the effects of a Maelstrom.

• **Order of the Gray Knights** — Membership in this elite group of Equitaes is accorded to those servants of the Ashen Lady who have demonstrated both the wisdom of their advancing years and their loyalty to the Hierarchy. The Gray Knights serve primarily as honor guards and official escorts for high-ranking wraiths in both Stygia and the Shadowlands.

• **Warriors of Lethe** — This Legion consists of members of the Silent Legion, although occasionally membership is extended to qualified individuals from other Legions. The Warriors of Lethe have one overriding desire — to forget their mortal lives. While they accept that Fetters are necessary to keep them from Oblivion's grasp, maintaining those Fetters is a constant source of anguish for them. Members of this Legion specialize in the performance of suicide missions. Their driving need to forget the source of their pain gives them the focus to succeed where others might have failed. They are generally accorded a great deal of respect by other Legions — as well as a wide berth.

• **The Legion of the Onyx Tear** — Members of this Legion ostensibly serve as bodyguards to the Beggar Lord and his closest advisors. In reality they have a secret purpose, known only to the Legion's members and the Beggar Lord himself. Despite evidence to the contrary, rumors persist of Charon's imminent return. Patrols from the Legion of the Onyx Tear regularly investigate these accounts. Opinion is divided among the membership as to whether the Deathlord who rules the victims of Mystery hopes to prove or disprove Charon's continued existence. Some speculate that the secrecy behind the Legion's true motives comes from the Beggar Lord's desire to locate Charon (if he still exists) and prevent his return.

• **Guardians of the Labyrinth** — Although they serve the Emerald Lord, the members of this Legion claim that Charon himself ordered the creation of the Guardians of the Labyrinth. The primary task of these wraiths is to maintain a watch near the Venous Stair, the spot from which any major Spectral attack on Stygia is most likely to originate. Members of this Legion are also sent to the Shadowlands in response to the discovery of especially large Nihils in the vicinity of a Necropolis. They provide both early warnings and first-line defenses against creatures from the Tempest.



• **The Hands of Bone** — Like the Smiling Lord, the Skeletal Lord keeps himself surrounded by members of an elite Legion sworn to his personal service. Members of this Legion Moliate their off-hand to resemble a skeleton's hand; when so desired, these hands will glow eerily, thus giving a Hand of Bone patrol a truly fearsome front when they are escorting their Lord or one of his household through the streets of Stygia.

It is assumed that the Lady of Fate supports at least one, if not several, elite Legions, but who they are and what their purposes are remains as mysterious as the Lady herself.

Inter-Legionary Orders

• **Legions of the Sacred Band** - Basing their existence on the legendary sacred bands of ancient Greece, the membership of this elite fighting group consists of pairs of soul-bonded Legionnaires. Same-sex and opposite-sex pairings exist in more or less equal numbers, although in some areas of the Shadowlands one group may outnumber the other. The Sacred Banders are noted for their extreme ferocity in battle, since each member fights not only to defeat her enemy but also to protect her soul-bonded mate. Members of this Legion frequently volunteer for high-risk missions, since their internal cohesiveness usually gives them a better chance of success than groups consisting of randomly associated Legionnaires. On the other hand, the destruction of one member of a bonded pair usually results in the immediate loss of the survivor... often through self-destruction.

• **The Online Legion** — This relatively recent addition to the ranks of special fighting forces consists entirely of Hierarchy wraiths skilled in the Inhabit Arcanos. They are not so much a fighting force as an elite team of information-gatherers and Skinlands-monitors. Their duties consist of keeping tabs on the increasing flow of information by attuning themselves to the vast computer networks of the Skinlands. Their forays along the electron highway often result in the timely acquisition of cutting-edge technology as well as vital data concerning events in the world of the Quick. They are a very close-knit group, with their own unique vocabulary and eccentric mannerisms.

• **Order of the Crow** — Perhaps the only one of its kind, this civilian-exclusive Legion honors those who, as reserve Legionnaires, have given greatly of themselves for the care of the newly dead or the defense of Stygia. No one knows who determines which wraiths are worthy of membership or how they come by this information, though some whisper of a power greater even than the Deathlords who makes the selection. A recipient only learns of the honor that has been bestowed upon him or her by the arrival of a crow feather inside the Haunt. More and more frequently, those reservists who attain the honor only receive it posthumously.

Secrets of the Hierarchy



lthough much information about the Hierarchy is public knowledge, there are a few closely guarded secrets known only to a privileged few. Wraiths unfortunate enough to stumble upon even vague rumors of these secrets often disappear without warning.

"Louie used to be a friend of mine. Yeah, he was a Legionnaire, but he was cool with us as long as we didn't make trouble. I trusted him about as much as anyone trusts anyone around here. Then one day Louie disappeared. A few weeks later he was back, and all he said was that he was off visiting one of his Fetters. I believed him. The next thing I know, the heat comes pounding on the door to our Haunt, bustin' us for being Renegades. So now I'm a thrall working in the mines. I hear Louie's marching in a Legion patrol. I think I can figure out what happened."

— Frankie, Work Team 43, Venous Stair, Stygia

Occasionally Legionnaires tire of playing the heavy. Standing guard over endless lines of manacled thralls bound for the mines or forges of Stygia; witnessing some of the harsher punishments dealt by the Hierarchy or even executing some of those punishments; dragging captured Renegades and Heretics, who seem no different than any other wraiths, to certain doom; and continually enduring the unvoiced hatred of many of their fellow wraiths simply for doing their duty eventually takes its toll on even the strongest personality. Many Legionnaires reach a point where the Hierarchy no longer seems to be a desirable organization to support.

A number of these potential defectors suddenly disappear from their patrols, only to return some weeks or months later displaying a new attitude. In place of their disaffection with the Hierarchy is a new desire to serve the Legions and a more subdued manner. When asked where they have been, most of them reply that they were "on vacation" or "visiting Fetters." Any further probing brings answers like, "I was feeling confused, maybe it was my Shadow getting crazy...but I'm much better now."

While some whisper about "reprogramming," the Hierarchy takes the stance that a Legionnaire unhappy in his work creates an even more destructive Shadow. The Hierarchy cares for those citizens who put their lives on the line in service to their government, and to simply cast them off shows a lack of respect for their work and their sacrifices. To release such people from service into the general civilian population could be disastrous, not to mention the risk of what an angry Shadow may reveal to unfriendly ears. Hierarchy commanders at all levels keep their eyes and ears open for troops showing signs of shell-shock

or dissatisfaction, and recommend them for time off to attend "retreats" where Pardoners counsel them and Castigate the more vicious Shadows. Commanders claim that to leave such people untreated opens the way for breakdowns, citing incidents of Shadow possessions among troubled troops which resulted in disaster.

In truth, some of these commanders may not be aware of the more sinister nature of these "retreats," said to be located in fortified outposts deep within the Tempest. While there are Pardoners and there is counseling of a sort, more often these outposts have the aspect of a "re-programming camp." Those in the know make jokes about "being shipped to Siberia" or refer to the camps as "the Gulag," often to the shock of their less-informed colleagues. Occasionally, known Renegades or Heretics will be kidnapped and shipped to one of these camps, where the same methods will be used to turn them into informers.

Although the location of these camps is classified information, known only to those officials directly in charge of the camps' administration, the fact of their existence is widely rumored. These rumors alone are frequently enough to keep many Legionnaires from voicing their political views or their dissatisfaction about their work or with the goals of the Hierarchy.

It should be obvious to anyone with half a mind. The Lady of Fate took it to ensure that none of the other Deathlords would dare to assume Charon's position. Or maybe the Beggar Lord took it just to piss off the Smiling Lord...

— conversation overheard in the Agora, Stygia

The question of the whereabouts of Charon's Mask provides many wraiths with endless opportunities to exercise their speculative talents. In reality, the only fact that has ever been confirmed is that it no longer hangs above Charon's throne. Each Deathlord reportedly has evidence that the mask was stolen by one of the other Deathlords, but none of these proofs has ever been made public. Official Hierarchy policy states that the mask is gone, and that any attempts to relocate it are destined to fail. This stance, of course, only makes it seem all the more certain that one of the Deathlords is hiding it in order to make sure that no single Deathlord assumes too much power over the others.

If, in fact, any of the Deathlords are aware of the location of Charon's Mask, it is the best kept secret (next to the identities of the Deathlords themselves) in the Underworld. The rumor that is given the greatest credit is that the Lady of Fate now holds it in trust for Charon or for another wraith who proves himself or herself worthy of





it. Others hold that the Ferrymen took the mask to one of their secret places, hoping that if Charon does return, he will have to seek them out to reclaim it, and this will give them a chance to remind him of his original calling. Then, of course, there are those who say that Charon himself slipped into the Onyx Tower through some hidden pathway and removed it. Some say it is in the hands of the Renegades, who are waiting for the right moment to put forward their own Lord of Stygia.

The possibilities are innumerable, but most wraiths feel that the Deathlords would be grateful to anyone who could bring them incontrovertible evidence pointing to the mask's location or proof that it has been destroyed.

"Who are they? Your guess is as good as mine. I figure that when they're not wearing their masks they could be just about anybody — maybe even you. Why're you so interested in knowing who they are anyway?"

— overheard on the streets of Stygia

The true identities of the Deathlords are concealed by the massive Artifact masks they wear. Nevertheless, every wraith-on-the-street has her own ideas about who the Deathlords really are. Many famous names have been put forward as candidates for one Deathlord or another, although some speculators maintain that historical importance in the mortal world is not necessarily a prerequisite for membership in Stygia's Ruling Council.

The concealing nature of their masks makes it entirely possible that the current Deathlords are not the originals; therefore some relatively modern names have been attributed to the men and women behind the mask. Some have even suggested that the current Laughing Lady is really male, while the Skeletal Lord's post has over the centuries been occupied interchangeably by different men and women.

The names most often attached to the position of the Smiling Lord are those of famous generals or rulers such as Alexander the Great, Hannibal, or William the Conqueror. Others proffer the names of various mass murderers, including Jack the Ripper (whoever he may be). Socrates, Boudicea, Brutus and Seneca have all been thought to be the personality behind the mask of the Quiet Lord, although some believe that his position has been taken in recent years by Virginia Woolf or Ernest Hemingway. Many believe that the position of the Laughing Lady once belonged to Caligula or Medea, although others maintain that "Mad Madge," the 17th century Duchess of Newcastle, now occupies the post.

Some maintain that the original Deathlords were not themselves selected by the manner of their deaths. Thus, it is possible that almost anyone could be the Ashen Lady, even one who died relatively young. Names that have been ascribed to one or more of the Deathlords include Charlemagne, Henry VIII, Diogenes, Cicero, Sappho, Eleanor of Aquitaine and any or all of the Borgias. Modern candidates include Marilyn Monroe, Thomas Wolfe, Albert Einstein, Amy Vanderbilt, Amelia Earhart and Reza Pahlavi.

While it is unlikely that anyone will ever discover the true identities of the Deathlords, playing the guessing game provides fodder for the rumor mill and amuses many wraiths in the Underworld. It is possible that someday someone's guess may prove accurate, but it is almost certain that, if so, that someone will not derive much satisfaction out of their being right.

"I saw a strange boat sail into the harbor of Stygia one night. It had no lights I could see, and it resembled nothing of ours nor any known Ferryman's vehicle. Some shadowy figures disembarked and made straight for the estates of the Deathlords. My watch ended before they left, and my relief claims to have seen nothing at all."

— Cedric of Glastonbury, Centurion of the Harbor Watch, Stygia, from the *Imprimatur*

Reports of the odd comings and goings of mysterious visitors to the Deathlords have given rise to the rumor that the Lords of Stygia have entered into some dangerous clandestine alliances. Some claim that the Deathlords have made deals of one sort or another with various Renegade or Heretic groups; the most popular theory puts forth that the Hierarchy has given the Renegades/Heretics their tacit approval to claim as many souls as they can in the areas occupied by the Dark Kingdoms. Other rumors claim that agents from the Dark Kingdoms have made secret pacts with some of the Deathlords, whereby souls belonging to rival Deathlords will be given to the Dark Kingdoms in return for a like number of their own souls. Darker rumors suggest that the Deathlords have made agreements with some powerful Spectres, ceding certain areas of the Shadowlands in return for their promise to stay away from Stygia. One persistent rumor holds that a dark ship containing emissaries from a vampiric domain in the midst of the Tempest has on several occasions docked in Stygia's harbor, and puts forth that negotiations between the Deathlords and these enigmatic representatives of the undead have been going on for some time.

These, and similar rumors, are usually only passed along in the most private places. Anyone giving even nominal credence to them usually disappears.

The Old Guard vs. the New Guard

In a bureaucracy, it is important to know which skirmishes to join and which to avoid.

— from Citizen X



ver the centuries, changing attitudes in the Skinlands have given rise to many wraiths who, while they respect and support the idea of a strong ruling body in the Underworld, object to many of the Hierarchy's long-standing policies.

This has led to an Old Guard/New Guard split within the government. In general, most Stygian wraiths (at least the long-time residents) belong to the Old Guard, while a growing number of Hierarchy members in the Shadowlands ally themselves with the New Guard.

Both groups agree that there is a need for the Hierarchy to maintain a strong presence in the Shadowlands, that the Hierarchy plays a crucial role in the war against Oblivion, and that it is important to root out Spectres wherever they may be encountered. The major issue which distinguishes the Old Guard from more modern Hierarchy supporters is that of the status of thralls.

Many of the Old Guard come from a time when slavery was not only acceptable, but even formed the basis of the economic system of some of the world's greatest civilizations. These Hierarchs see thralls as chattel, valuable only in what they can be forced to produce.

The New Guard opposes both the use of the word "slave" (adopting the less perjurious term "thrall") and the entire system whereby one wraith owns another. Some Necropoli in the Shadowlands have adopted the feudal model, proposed at one time by Charon but widely ignored in practice by most of the Stygian Hierarchy. Still others have banned the practice of keeping thralls as personal servants altogether, and have even gone so far as to offer sanctuary to escaped thralls. Despite strong feelings on both sides regarding the issue of thralls, both Old and New Guard agree that some measures must be taken to prevent weak and Fetterless wraiths from feeding the Void.

Other issues upon which the Hierarchy is divided include the matter of contact with the Skinlands, the contesting interpretations of the Code of Charon, and the question of how best to deal with Renegades, Heretics and the Dark Kingdoms. The Old Guard, of course, opposes skinriding or the use of any Arcanos that allows contact with the mortal world, upholds a strict interpretation of Charon's laws, favors the elimination of Renegades and Heretics, and considers the Dark Kingdoms as hostile powers with which they are in direct competition for souls. The





New Guard has a more relaxed attitude toward discreet forays into the Skinlands, claims that the Code of Charon needs to be updated, and favors limited cooperation with Renegades, Heretics and the Dark Kingdoms where common ground can be found. Since most of the more radical elements within the Hierarchy dwell in the Shadowlands, far from Stygia's control, the existence of two philosophical camps has not caused a major rift in the government of the Underworld. Should Stygia once again take an active part in the affairs of the Shadowlands, however, the Hierarchy may very well find itself on the verge of civil war.

The Forbidden Topic

Hush...Listen...Can you hear that soft scream, that tiny moan that seems to come from everywhere and nowhere? Look down at the roadway beneath your feet. Look around you at the goods in the marketplace. Now, feel the coins in your pocket. That sound that nags at your ears in the quietest moments comes from all those things. That sound is the unheard cry of shattered souls, unmade in the fires of Stygia and pounded, screaming, into tools and weapons and spendable coin. Look at the sword you carry so proudly. Was she someone you knew? Think about it long enough... and you'll stop thinking about it. You'll have to, or you'll run screaming into the Maelstrom, driven by the cries of things that used to have names."

— Sister Angelina of the Penniless Multitude, transcript of her final speech before disorporation, archives of the Magisterium Veritatis, Stygia

Everybody knows it. Nobody talks about it. The smelting of souls forms the single largest native industry in the Underworld. Apart from relics or Fetters, apart from the few physical substances that exist in the lands of the dead, everything tangible consists, at least in part, of souplasm, the malleable residue made from the Corpus of wraiths consigned to the soul-forges of Stygia.

Although the transformation of sentient beings into presumably nonsentient raw building materials is not considered a fit subject for polite or casual conversation, the questionable ethics behind the smelting of souls remains the major point of contention for critics both outside and within the Hierarchy. Many Renegades who might otherwise support the Hierarchy's primary goals simply cannot accept the wholesale rendering of wraiths into plasm and oppose the Hierarchy for that reason alone. In a few isolated areas, enlightened Anacreons have refused to send thralls as tribute to Stygia and have taken measures to minimize the possession and circulation of plasm-based items.

Despite attempts by the higher powers to silence discussion of the subject, the debate rages. Defenders of the smelting of souls argue that the creatures (no one refers to them as individuals) so destined represent only those elements of wraith society either too weak to withstand the inexorable pull of Oblivion or too useless to become productive in any other fashion. Here, these creatures become productive members of society, even if it is just as a paving-stone or the hilt of a Legionnaire's sword. These defenders point to the wall of living souls that surrounds Stygia and forms her first line of defense against potential attackers. They point to the vast system of roads and rails, made from alloys of soul-strengthened metal and stone from the mines of the Venous Stair. They point to the manacles and chains that are used to anchor weak but productive thralls to the Shadowlands, so that they will not be sucked into the Void. Sometimes they point to the lampposts made from Moliated thralls, set alight to illuminate the pervasive Stygian darkness or the thrall-torches that mark the external borders of the Necropoli in the Shadowlands. Occasionally they point to the material conveniences made possible through the use of souplasm, but even other Hierarchs consider this to be the weakest of their arguments.

Those who oppose the transformation of souls into goods have their own counterarguments. Material items can be obtained in the Underworld by destroying them in the Skinlands. The process takes more time and considerably more effort, but the souls saved from the forges could be provided with Fetters acquired from wraiths who possess a surplus and put to work gathering newly destroyed Skinland items. Objects made solely from the minerals available in the mines beneath Stygia, while not as strong or long-lasting as their soul-infused counterparts, could still serve the same purpose. Only the slavish attempts to reproduce the conveniences of mortal existence perpetuate the artificial market for unnecessary goods. Beings who have no need for food or clothing or material goods in general should learn to get along without these luxuries, particularly when the sacrifice of thousands of once-sentient beings is necessary for their production.

There is also a third side to this controversy. Some equivocators argue that while many objects, including oboli, are unnecessary for survival in the Underworld, certain necessary items may require a limited use of souplasm in their making. Weapons and building materials vital for bolstering the defenses of Stygia and the Shadowlands would, of course, have to consist of the stuff of souls, but at least the actual numbers of souls slated for the forges would be kept to an absolute minimum, and only the very weakest or most criminal elements would suffer this final ignominy.

In the end, however, the morality behind the smelting of souls remains a moot point. Charon sanctioned the process during the building of Stygia; the Deathlords have

decreed that the production of soulplasm is good for the economy of the Empire; and the average wraith-on-the-street who depends on a lantern to light his path, a sword for self-defense and a comfortable chair to relax in when he returns to his Haunt to rest refuses to think about the process whereby those items were formed.

It is said that the lands of death are anything but quiet, and perhaps the constant noise and chatter of the Restless Dead serves a valuable purpose in drowning out the tortured whimpers of items from the Stygian forges.

Views from the Hierarchy



raiths

Renegades

Even though these traitors and rebels set themselves in opposition to us, they are not free from our claims upon their souls. Their greatest crime is not that they seek to openly oppose us, but that they shirk their responsibilities to the Legions to which they rightfully belong. Disagreeing with us is not, in and of itself, a crime; desertion is, and those who call themselves Renegades, freedom fighters, dissenters or whatever else suits their fancy are nothing more than deserters.

— Silenus of Sparta, Minister of Justice for the Grim Legions, Stygia

Their troubles with the Hierarchy apply more to Stygia than to her Necropoli. While we don't belittle the potential danger they represent, we do recognize that most Renegades are very willing to join with us to defend our territory from Spectres and other Tempest-spawned creatures. So long as they don't interfere with our duties, we can tolerate them for the extra assistance they provide in an emergency.

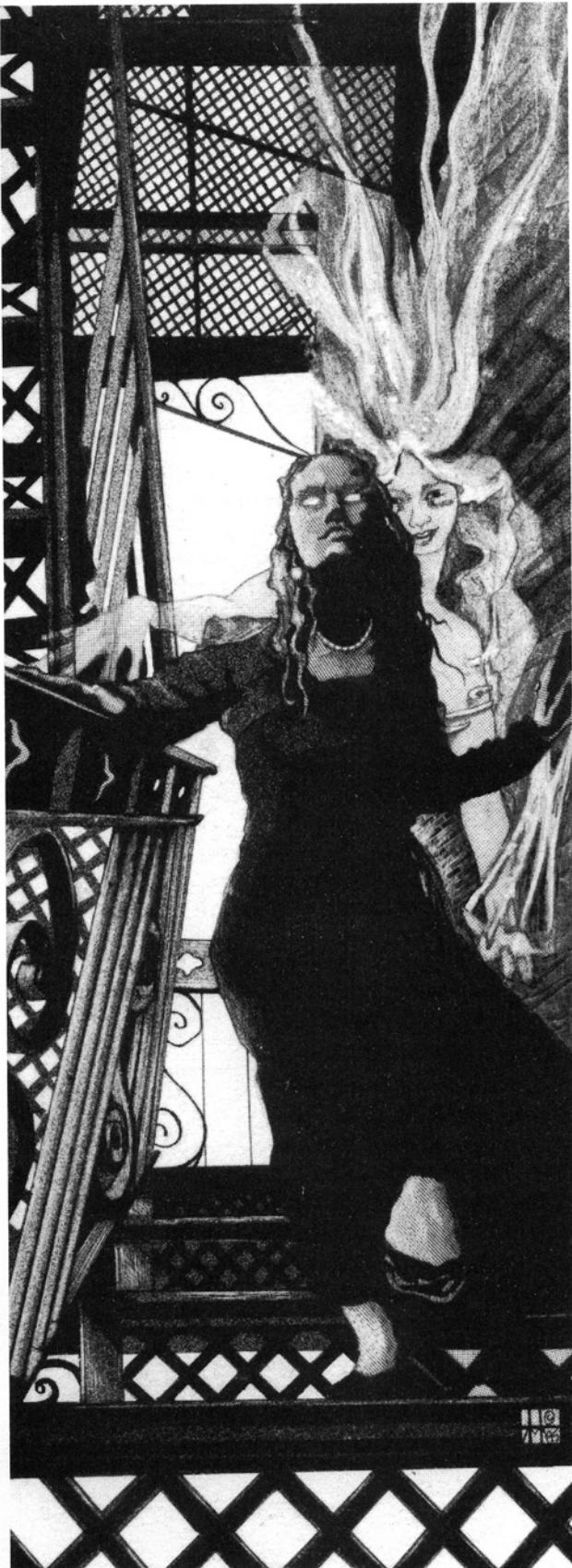
— Marianne Thibeault, Regent for the Silent Legion, Necropolis of Berkeley

Heretics

In some ways, Spectres are easier to deal with than these crazed fanatics. They refuse to believe the truth contained in the Proclamation of Reason — that the Far Shores hold nothing but lies — and so they waste their time preparing for an afterlife they can never hope to attain. Discorporation would be a mercy for most of them.

— Joachim Pisarro, Marshall of the Skeletal Legions, Stygia

The discovery of a group of Heretics always means trouble. We have tried to reason with them, to coax them away from their false beliefs, but in most cases we have failed miserably. Still, you have to admire their dedication; a little more of that virtue in our own ranks would be helpful.



Culture: Inside the Hierarchy

— Vera Mason, Inspector for the Legion of Paupers, Necropolis of Detroit

Ferrymen

They serve a vital purpose here in the Underworld, and many of our citizens owe their continued existence to the timely intervention of a Ferryman. Because of this and out of respect for Charon, we allow them to remain an independent faction within the Underworld. We can only hope that they will one day petition to rejoin the ranks of those they once spurned, so long ago. Until that time, we treat them with courtesy, respect and not a little caution.

— Raphaela Monteleone, Inspector of the Quays for the Iron Legion, Stygia

These tireless travelers have proven their worth here in the Shadowlands a hundredfold. We could surely come to some agreement with them — if only they were more predictable! Still, the services they provide compensate their erratic behavior. Our Haunts are always open to them.

— Evan O'Brien, Centurion of the Legion of the Emerald Legions, Necropolis of Dublin

The Dark Kingdoms

Ivory, Jade, Copper, Lead...they can call themselves whatever they like. What it all boils down to is that they are unwilling to recognize the advantages we have to offer and they spurn all our efforts to join with them in a common cause. One would almost believe that they would rather see their souls disappear into Oblivion than accept our help. Still, we cannot afford an open conflict, so we are forced to yield to their demands.

— Basil de Voort, Inspector for the Gaunt Legions, Stygia

If the situation were reversed and they had come into our lands demanding our souls, we would probably have met them with the same tenacity. We need to accept the reality of cultural differences and find ways to work with, instead of against, these fellow wraiths, however alien they may seem on the surface.

— Signe Ruytens, Pardoner to the Legion of Paupers, Necropolis of Johannesburg

The Quick

Mortal Fetters

Those of us who still have personal or familial connections with the world of the living find the restrictions





mandated by the Code of Charon a true test of our spiritual strength. Certainly, Charon never meant to stop us from looking in on those we love, particularly if they still bind us to them. However, here in Stygia, the world of mortals is so far away that their activities as individuals matter little. It is best for all concerned to let the affairs of the living occupy the living, and only the living.

—Sir Austin Fitzhenry, Order of the Unlidded Eye, Stygia

We can all sit with your poppin' in on the family and all, really — just don't raise the Tempest when you do it! I mean, what are we going to do about it? Can't have the Legions runnin' all over Hell's half-acre trying to keep tabs on everybody. There's nothing wrong with looking in on Mum and Da or whoever. They still love us, God bless 'em, and the least we can do is remember them. Sometimes, they're what hold us together, because when we forget each other, we come that much closer to the Oblivion.

—Sarah Smythe-Hutton, Monitor for the Legion of Paupers, Necropolis of Liverpool

Psychic Investigators

Mortals who meddle in our affairs, whether they seek to prove or disprove our existence, should be studiously and aggressively avoided. Members of the Arcanum usually pose no real threat so long as they have no concrete evidence of our existence. Likewise, investigators into the existence of psychic phenomenon can easily be avoided. Mediums and other mortals with real abilities to sense our presence need to be handled much more carefully. Strong measures must be taken to prevent or punish cooperation or communication with these individuals by our citizenry.

—Flavia Lucillana, Inspector for the Magisterium Veritatis, Stygia

Officially, our policy is to vacate the premises when the psychic squad arrives. Some of them can actually force us out of our Haunts if they even suspect our presence, so temporary vacations are usually in order. There's always going to be a few who can't resist taking a poke at them, and they can hardly be blamed for trying when it comes to that sensitive Kirlian equipment. As for mediums and seers — they're a hard call. Some of them are just so earnest, they practically reek of Pathos. And their poor clients... We try to discourage getting involved, but who can resist a long, cool drink from such a deep well?

—Rolando Trujillo, Centurion, Legion of Paupers, Necropolis of Havana

Intruders

Those, such as the Benandanti and the Society of Saint James, who already know of us are particularly dangerous since they actively invade our realms and seek us out. It is our policy, therefore, to discourage contact with the Benandanti. The fanatics of the Society of Saint James come to us as wraiths

bent on our destruction; these need to be eliminated as soon as possible upon their arrival in the Underworld.

—Josiah Hurley, Legate of the Office of Justice, Legions of the Grim, Stygia

The Benandanti are as enigmatic to us as we are to them. They fear and respect us, but more importantly, they seek us out in the Shadowlands. Sometimes they are hard to recognize, so we can't be blamed for associating with them from time to time. They can be tough allies in battles with Spectres. The Society of Saint James presents a real danger, unless they can be pointed in the right direction... into the nearest Maelstrom. We try to avoid all of them, but it doesn't always work out.

—Belle Drummond, Marshall of the Penitent Legions, Necropolis of Austin

The Clergy

Fortunately, here in Stygia we are rarely bothered by attempts to exorcise or banish us. We have little to do with the Skinlands directly. So long as they reserve their dealings with the dead to funerals and prayers for our "departed souls," we bear them no ill will.

—Rudgarth Rudgarthson, Imperial Order of the Sickle, Stygia

When you see them approaching your Haunt with the proverbial bell, book and candle, head for the byroads as fast as your Argos can take you. You never know which ones have enough clout to cause real harm; even the weak ones can make you feel uncomfortable. Some of them make promises and offer soothing words to gull you into responding to them, but all they want to do is give you "eternal rest." Ha!

—Brad Breakstone, Centurion of the Skeletal Legions, Necropolis of Baltimore

The Mad and the Innocent

As with any mortal, contact with those for whom the Shroud is but a thin veil between the worlds should be assiduously shunned. We expect our agents on the fringes of the Skinlands to anticipate the approach of these creatures and to take appropriate measures.

—Lady Veronica, Minister of Antiquities, Stygia

Our strongest protection against inadvertent discovery is that no one believes children and fools. Even if one or the other does manage to point our presence out, they are generally met with derision or pity. "Oh, look, there's a ghost!" just doesn't hold water in the modern world. We have more important things to worry about than a few wide-eyed babes or gibbering lunatics.

—Anselm Forrester, Centurion of the Emerald Legions, Necropolis of Charleston

Supernatural Creatures

Vampires

We ignore the existence of these semi-dead creatures at our peril. Their partial membership in the society of the dead affords them certain powers that can sometimes prove inconvenient or even disastrous for us. The magics some of them command are particularly dangerous, since those vampires learn the art of summoning and control over the spirits of the dead. Other vampires have such a fascination with morbidity that I wonder why they do not simply take the final step in their eternal dance with death. Dark rumors have reached us of an enclave somewhere in the Shadowlands, a city of mystery founded and maintained by vampires for some unknown purpose. Wraiths who have gone in search of this city have never returned. So long as vampires choose to remain grounded in the mortal world, we cannot truly accept them into our company. They remain forever apart, forever alien, forever tainted by their reluctance to release their hold on life.

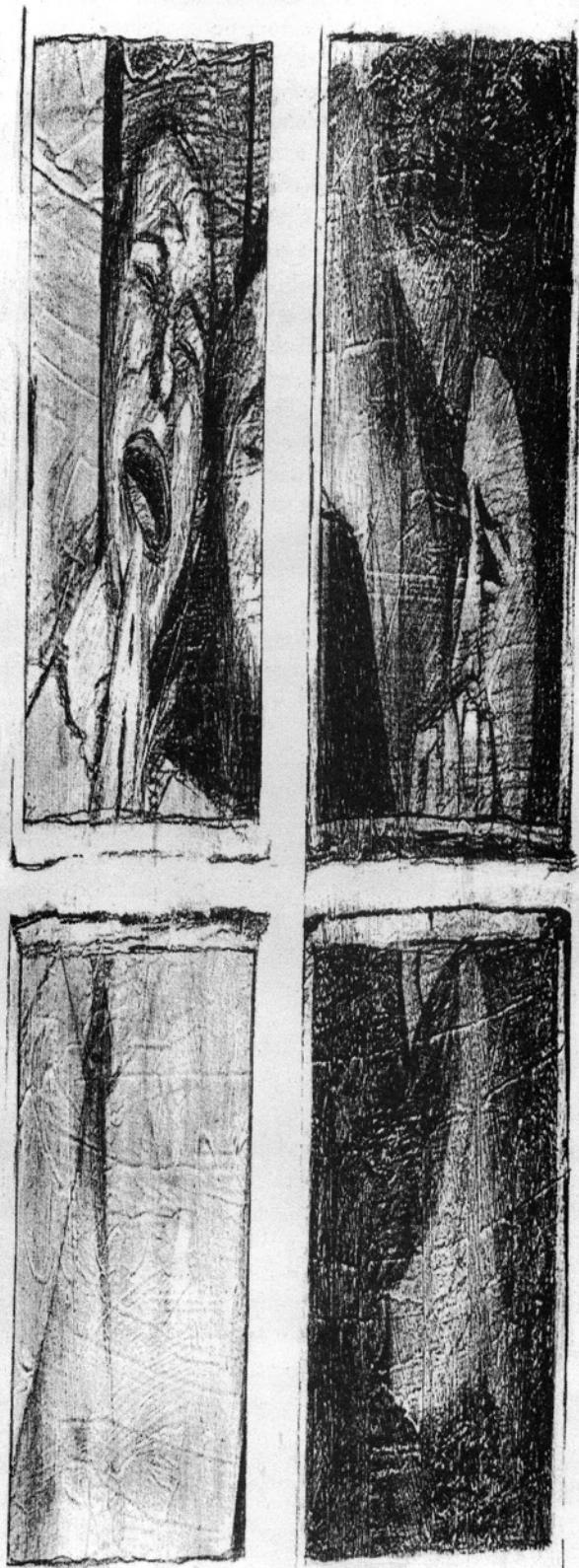
— Thanatorius the Elder, Princeps Veritatis, Stygia

We share more than a bond of death with these powerful spinners of intrigue. Our Necropoli are, in many cases, superimposed on areas the vampires consider their "turf." Like us, they have a keen interest in the affairs of mortals; unlike us, they are only too willing to involve themselves in human politics. Much of what Stygia blames on our interference is actually the result of vampiric machinations. In addition, sooner or later, some of them, particularly those who study necromancy and spirit magic, discover our presence. When that happens, it is best if we can approach them from a position of strength. This, of course, means that we have to keep a watchful eye on their activities. In a few rare instances, relationships of mutual assistance have been possible between our kind and theirs. In rarer instances, these relationships have intensified into bonds of affection and trust. For purposes of longevity, having a vampire as a Fetter is an advantage not to be discounted. Whether or not they fall under the strictures of the Code of Charon seems to be a matter of personal interpretation. In the end, it never hurts to exercise caution.

— Camilla Harker-Lyndholm, Monitor for the Silent Legion, Necropolis of Amsterdam

Werewolves

Our Underworld seems to be part of a greater spirit world which we share with these creatures of mortal flesh and immortal spirit. There are definite territorial boundaries, however, which separate our part of this spiritual dimension from theirs. Travel between the two is difficult, if possible at all, and not without hazards. We rarely venture into the place the Garou call the Near Umbra; likewise, they seldom enter our realm, which they call the Dark



Omaha '95



Umbra. One tribe of Garou, the Silent Striders, has a great deal of knowledge of the ways of the dead and sometimes ventures into the Underworld. The Garou can bind spirits into objects; this makes them dangerous to us. Some of them see us as enemies to be destroyed; this also makes them dangerous. Their descriptions of their primal enemy, which they call the Wyrm, resemble nothing so much as some monstrous Malfean creature. If this is true, then they are also aware of the danger of Oblivion. Although contact with them should not be aggressively pursued, it is possible that we may be distant allies in the same battle for survival.

— Luther Sheen, Princeps of the Stygian Watch

Most werewolves consider us to be creatures of “the Wyrm” because we are no longer part of the living world, which they call “Gaia.” What they fail to understand is that our continuing ties to the living world make us a part of nature; death is natural, and so is life-after-death. If we thought that they could help us keep Oblivion at bay, we would attempt to enlist their aid (discreetly, of course). The Silent Striders have learned a lot about death and the ways of death from their beginnings in ancient Egypt. This makes them at once both a potential danger and a potential resource. Truck with them at your own peril—but make sure no Stygian eyes are watching when you do.

— Veronique Gilbeaux, Regent for the Penitent Legions, Necropolis of Marseilles

Mages

Mortals gifted with the ability to work magick can sometimes ignore the effects of the Shroud. Mages have always been problematic for us. Indeed, some say that the Code of Charon came about largely because of widespread trafficking between mages (or witches) and the spirits of the dead. Although some types of mages frequent the Shadowlands, few have ever made it as far as the heart of the Underworld. The official policy is to have as little to do with them as possible.

— Gascon du Bois, Sub-Consul of the Skeletal Legions, Stygia

There is little that we can do to prevent mages who possess sufficient knowledge from entering our Necropoli. Dreamspeakers seek us out for the wisdom they believe we possess. The Euthanatos are fascinated with our realm and even send their initiates in to test them; one might say they have a “death-wish.” The Order of Hermes tries to summon us, the Celestial Chorus tries to lay us to rest,

and the Nephandi try to control us, but they usually have better luck with Spectres, since they seem to be cut from the same cloth. The motivations behind Marauders cannot be fathomed, and their connections with the Shadowlands seem almost accidental. The Technocracy attempts to deny us or rationalize us; failing that, they seek to exterminate us as inconsistent with their concept of reality. (We welcome the arrival of wraiths who were once members of the Technocracy; their panic at finding themselves trapped in a reality they cannot control and which they formerly denied is exquisite.) Fortunately, mages have their own concerns, and these occupy most of their time. We deal with them, as with everything else, as we must.

— Sofia Bascombe, Inspector for the Legions of the Grim, Necropolis of Philadelphia

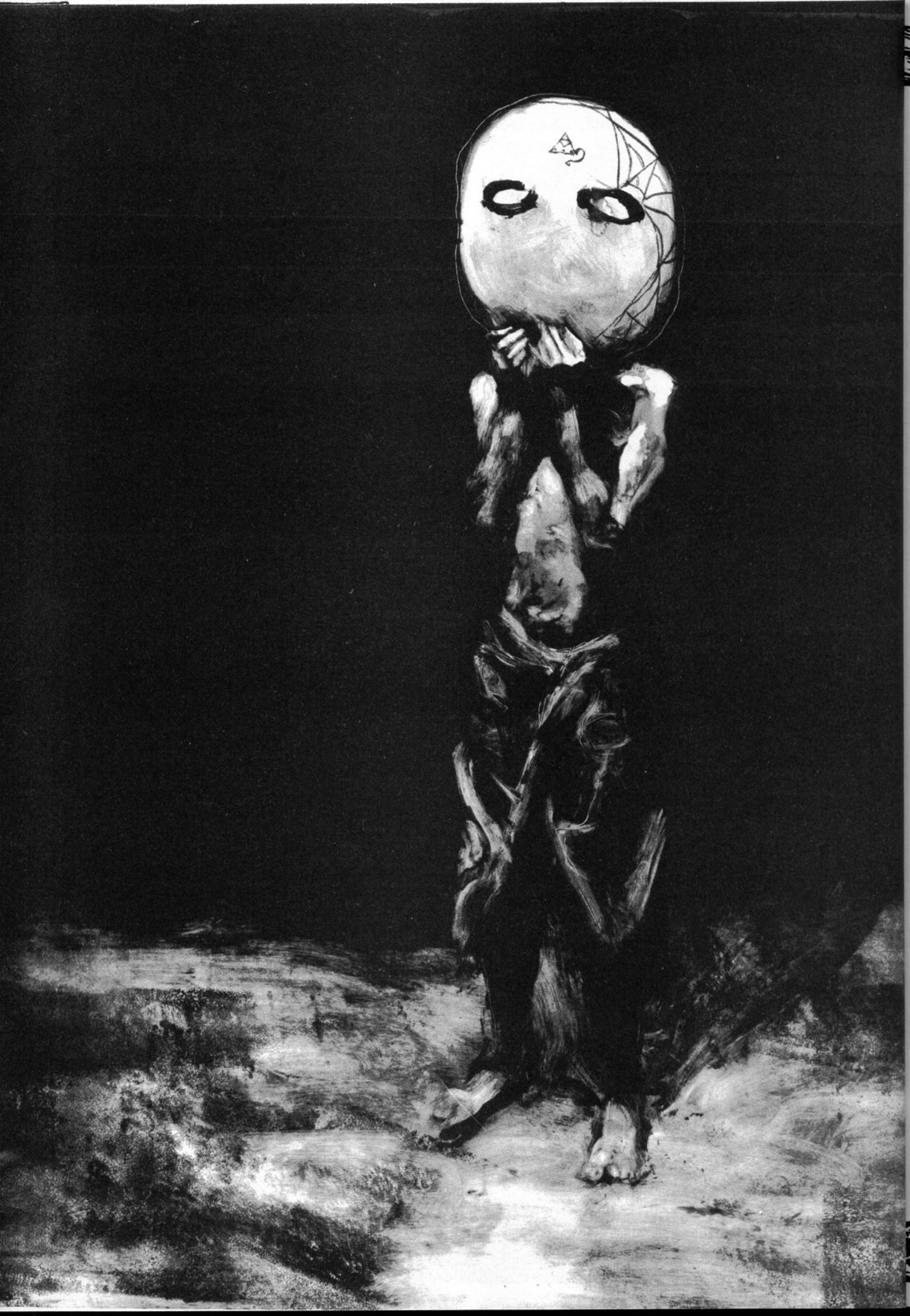
Changelings

The race of faerie withdrew from the mortal realm long ago, and the passage between our realm and theirs stands closed. Once they paid tithes to us every seven years, by sending one of their own to dwell in the lands of death. That, too, has ceased. Now we Slumber without the assurance of Dreams. They fear Banality as much as we do Oblivion; perhaps the two are not unrelated. The faeries who remained on earth, the changelings, fear us and accuse us of draining them of passion and creativity. It is true that they make very potent Fetters. Others of their kind, who show a dark fascination with the realm of shadows, have made overtures to us, but perhaps they seek out darkness to match their own. We are hesitant to respond to these Unseelie changelings until we know who they truly serve.

— Tristan of Lyons, Archivist, Stygia

Like all creatures who are more than mortal, changelings present a problem to us. Some few changelings become wraiths, indistinguishable from normal humans except for the presence of a few memories of their true origins. These creatures suffer greatly in what they consider to be a fallen state and become prime candidates for membership in the Silent Legions. Like us, they suffer from the growing tide of disbelief. We should find a way to make common cause with them.

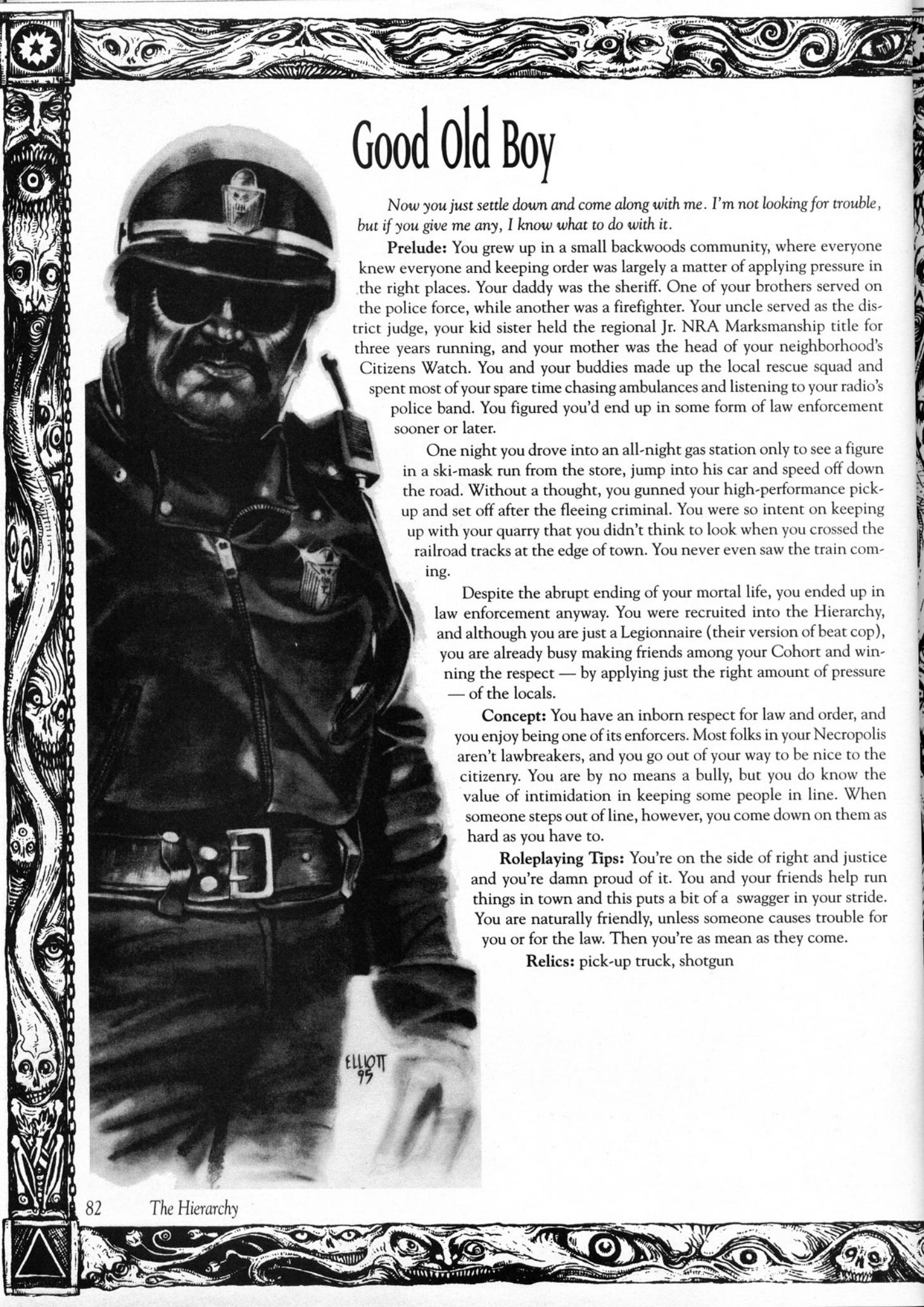
— Siobhann Dunleavy, Regent for the Silent Legion, Necropolis of Galway



Hierarchy Archetypes

As to the common people, Mr. Everyman, one has to be hard with them and see that they do their work and that under the threat of the sword and the law they comply...just as you chain up wild beasts so as to get a peaceful life.

—Martin Luther, Werke, Vol. XV



Good Old Boy

Now you just settle down and come along with me. I'm not looking for trouble, but if you give me any, I know what to do with it.

Prelude: You grew up in a small backwoods community, where everyone knew everyone and keeping order was largely a matter of applying pressure in the right places. Your daddy was the sheriff. One of your brothers served on the police force, while another was a firefighter. Your uncle served as the district judge, your kid sister held the regional Jr. NRA Marksmanship title for three years running, and your mother was the head of your neighborhood's Citizens Watch. You and your buddies made up the local rescue squad and spent most of your spare time chasing ambulances and listening to your radio's police band. You figured you'd end up in some form of law enforcement sooner or later.

One night you drove into an all-night gas station only to see a figure in a ski-mask run from the store, jump into his car and speed off down the road. Without a thought, you gunned your high-performance pick-up and set off after the fleeing criminal. You were so intent on keeping up with your quarry that you didn't think to look when you crossed the railroad tracks at the edge of town. You never even saw the train coming.

Despite the abrupt ending of your mortal life, you ended up in law enforcement anyway. You were recruited into the Hierarchy, and although you are just a Legionnaire (their version of beat cop), you are already busy making friends among your Cohort and winning the respect — by applying just the right amount of pressure — of the locals.

Concept: You have an inborn respect for law and order, and you enjoy being one of its enforcers. Most folks in your Necropolis aren't lawbreakers, and you go out of your way to be nice to the citizenry. You are by no means a bully, but you do know the value of intimidation in keeping some people in line. When someone steps out of line, however, you come down on them as hard as you have to.

Roleplaying Tips: You're on the side of right and justice and you're damn proud of it. You and your friends help run things in town and this puts a bit of a swagger in your stride. You are naturally friendly, unless someone causes trouble for you or for the law. Then you're as mean as they come.

Relics: pick-up truck, shotgun

ELLIOTT
95

Marath

THE OBLIVION

Name: **EXPLORER**
 Player: **JUDGE**
 Chronicle: **DANGER JUNKIE**

Life: **GOOD OLE BOY**
 Death: **HAPPENSTANCE**
 Regret: **NEVER LIVED TO BE A SHERIFF**

Attributes

Physical

Strength **●●●●○**
 Dexterity **●●●○○**
 Stamina **●●●●○**

Social

Charisma **●●●○○**
 Manipulation **●●○○○**
 Appearance **●●●○○**

Mental

Perception **●●○○○**
 Intelligence **●●○○○**
 Wits **●●●○○**

Abilities

Talents

Alertness **●●○○○**
 Athletics **○○○○○**
 Awareness **○○○○○**
 Brawl **●●●●○**
 Dodge **●○○○○**
 Empathy **●○○○○**
 Expression **○○○○○**
 Intimidation **●●●○○**
 Streetwise **○○○○○**
 Subterfuge **○○○○○**

Skills

Crafts **○○○○○**
 Drive **●●○○○**
 Etiquette **●○○○○**
 Firearms **●●○○○**
 Leadership **●●○○○**
 Meditation **○○○○○**
 Melee **●●○○○**
 Performance **○○○○○**
 Repair **●●○○○**
 Stealth **○○○○○**

Knowledge

Bureaucracy **○○○○○**
 Computer **○○○○○**
 Enigmas **●○○○○**
 Investigation **●○○○○**
 Law **●●○○○**
 Linguistics **○○○○○**
 Medicine **●○○○○**
 Occult **○○○○○**
 Politics **○○○○○**
 Science **○○○○○**

Advantages

Backgrounds

CONTACTS (SHADOWLANDS) **●●○○○**
 HAUNT **●●○○○**
 MEMORIAM **●●●○○**
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○

Passions

PROTECT FAMILY (LOVE) **●●●●○**
 UPHOLD THE LAW (HOPE) **●●●○○**
 RISE IN LEGION RANKS (ENVY) **○○○○○**
 CONTINUE CHASING AMBULANCES (DESIRE) **●●○○○**
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○

Fetters

TRAIN TRACKS (DEATHSITE) **●●○○○**
 COON HOUND SADIE **●●○○○**
 FATHER'S SHERIFF'S OFFICE **●●●○○**
 KID SISTER VICKI **●●●○○**
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○

Arcanos

ARGOS **○○○○○**
 CASTIGATE **●○○○○**
 LIFEWEB **●○○○○**
 OUTRAGE **●●○○○**
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○

Corpus

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Willpower

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○
 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Angst

● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Thorns

TINTED SHOTGUN, BAD LUCK, SHADOW TRAIT (STEALTH), TRICK OF THE LIGHT

Experience

[Empty box for experience points]

Pathos

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Dark Passions

BULLY THE WEAK (HATE) **●●●●○**
 SUBVERT THE LAW (DESPAIR) **●●●○○**
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○

Mediator

The laws of Stygia exist for a reason, and they're not as inflexible as you might think. Let's see if we can't come to some accord that will satisfy all concerned.

Prelude: Your parents were ex-hippies and they instilled in you a strong desire to make the world a better place. Your views, however, differed from theirs, in that you believed that you could create a better world while still working within the system. You decided that you wanted to be a lawyer (despite all those lawyer jokes) and use the law as a vehicle to protect the rights of individuals, classes, and the environment.

You began your career as a public defender, providing legal representation for defendants who could not otherwise afford counsel. In your spare time you volunteered your services to various legal aid groups and studied mediation techniques. You didn't realize how hard you were pushing yourself until you had your first heart attack at the age of 35. You tried to slow down, but there was always so much to be done. You were only 40 when you went into cardiac arrest for the third time. It was also to be the last.

As a wraith, your desire to make positive changes in society by improving the system continues to thrive. You sympathize with many Renegades and even some Heretics, but you believe that they have missed the point by opting out of the Hierarchy. If they're not part of things, they can't make them better. Your job as a Clerk in your Necropolis has given you a few opportunities to exercise your talents as a negotiator, but you'll have to work harder to rise high enough to make a real impact on the society of the dead.

Concept: You are a liberal through and through. You believe that the Hierarchy should take care of its people and that, even though it may be a flawed institution, it is better than no government at all. You are a firm believer in compromise and in procuring justice for the underdog.

Roleplaying Tips: Your passion for justice and your belief in the ideals of the Hierarchy verge on the fanatic. You don't know how to stop working at the task of peacemaking... and you don't want to! You believe that the law is a miraculous and eminently flexible tool for the common good, and your ardent conviction shows in your words and actions. Let everyone you meet see your sincerity. Demand much from the members of your Cohort, and even more from yourself.

Relics: law diploma



ELLIOTT '95

2raith

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: JUDGE
Demeanor: FANATIC
Shadow: PERFECTIONIST

Life: PEACEKEEPER
Death: HEARTATTACK (DISEASE)
Regret: NOT HELPING
ENOUGH PEOPLE

Attributes

Physical	Social	Mental
Strength     	Charisma     	Perception     
Dexterity     	Manipulation     	Intelligence     
Stamina     	Appearance     	Wits     

Abilities

Talents	Skills	Knowledge			
Alertness	●〇〇〇〇	Crafts	〇〇〇〇〇	Bureaucracy	●●●〇〇
Athletics	〇〇〇〇〇	Drive	●〇〇〇〇	Computer	●〇〇〇〇
Awareness	●〇〇〇〇	Etiquette	●●〇〇〇	Enigmas	●〇〇〇〇
Brawl	〇〇〇〇〇	Firearms	●〇〇〇〇	Investigation	●●〇〇〇
Dodge	●〇〇〇〇	Leadership	●●〇〇〇	Law	●●●〇〇
Empathy	●●〇〇〇	Meditation	●●〇〇〇	Linguistics	〇〇〇〇〇
Expression	●●〇〇〇	Melee	〇〇〇〇〇	Medicine	〇〇〇〇〇
Intimidation	〇〇〇〇〇	Performance	●〇〇〇〇	Occult	●〇〇〇〇
Streetwise	●〇〇〇〇	Repair	〇〇〇〇〇	Politics	●●〇〇〇
Subterfuge	●〇〇〇〇	Stealth	〇〇〇〇〇	Science	〇〇〇〇〇

Advantages

Backgrounds	Passions	Feuders
CONTACTS (SKINLANDS)	●●●○○	SUPPORT HIERARCHY (HOPE) ●●●●○
EIDOLON	●○○○○	CARE FOR PARENTS (LOVE) ●●○○○
HAUNT	●●○○○	FIGHT INJUSTICE (ANGER) ●●○○○
STATUS	●○○○○	DEFEND THE WEAK (JUSTICE) ●●○○○
WEALTH	●○○○○	00000
MEMORIAM	●●○○○	00000
	00000	00000

1 Arcanos

	Arcanos	Corpus	Angst
CASTIGATE	●●○○○	□□□□□	●●●●●○○○○○
LIFEWEB	●○○○○	□□□□□	□□□□□
OUTRAGE	●○○○○	Willpower	□□□□□
PUPPETRY	●○○○○	●●●●●●●○○○	Thoms
	○○○○○	□□□□□	SHADOW CALL, DEATH'S SIGIL (RED AURA), FREUDIAN SLIP
	○○○○○	□□□□□	Dark Passions

Experience

The diagram consists of three horizontal lines. The top line contains the words "Experience", "Pathos", and "INCITE VIOLENCE (ANGER)" with a checkmark. The middle line contains a series of black squares. The bottom line contains a series of open squares.

Pathos

Pathos

Dark Passions

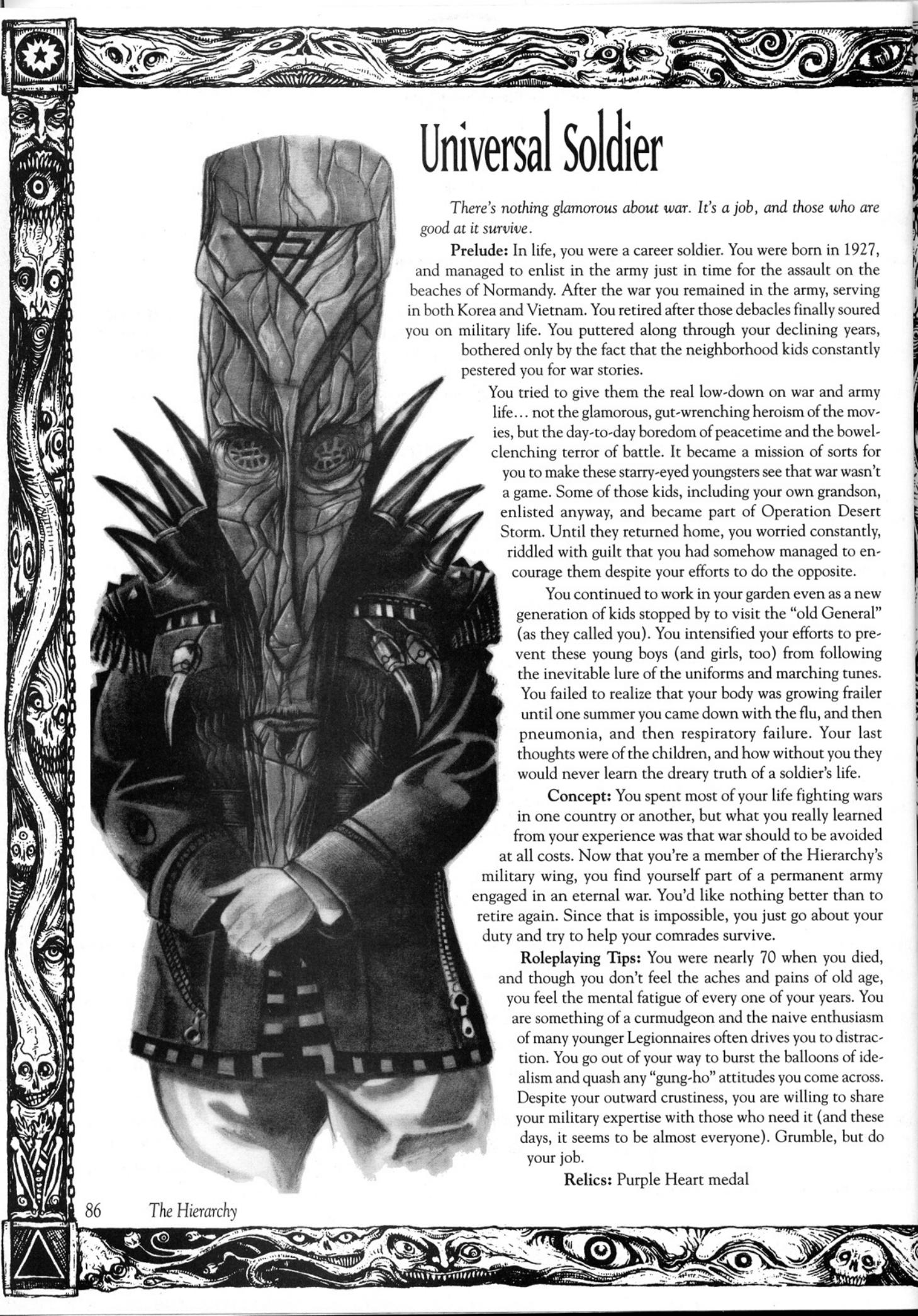
SHADOW CALL, DEATH'S SIGIL

Dark Passions

INCITE VIOLENCE (ANGER) ● ● ●
UNDERMINE THE LAW ● ● ●

Dark Passions

INCITE VIOLENCE (ANGER) ● ● ●
UNDERMINE THE LAW ● ● ●



Universal Soldier

There's nothing glamorous about war. It's a job, and those who are good at it survive.

Prelude: In life, you were a career soldier. You were born in 1927, and managed to enlist in the army just in time for the assault on the beaches of Normandy. After the war you remained in the army, serving in both Korea and Vietnam. You retired after those debacles finally soured you on military life. You puttered along through your declining years, bothered only by the fact that the neighborhood kids constantly pestered you for war stories.

You tried to give them the real low-down on war and army life... not the glamorous, gut-wrenching heroism of the movies, but the day-to-day boredom of peacetime and the bowel-clenching terror of battle. It became a mission of sorts for you to make these starry-eyed youngsters see that war wasn't a game. Some of those kids, including your own grandson, enlisted anyway, and became part of Operation Desert Storm. Until they returned home, you worried constantly, riddled with guilt that you had somehow managed to encourage them despite your efforts to do the opposite.

You continued to work in your garden even as a new generation of kids stopped by to visit the "old General" (as they called you). You intensified your efforts to prevent these young boys (and girls, too) from following the inevitable lure of the uniforms and marching tunes. You failed to realize that your body was growing frailer until one summer you came down with the flu, and then pneumonia, and then respiratory failure. Your last thoughts were of the children, and how without you they would never learn the dreary truth of a soldier's life.

Concept: You spent most of your life fighting wars in one country or another, but what you really learned from your experience was that war should to be avoided at all costs. Now that you're a member of the Hierarchy's military wing, you find yourself part of a permanent army engaged in an eternal war. You'd like nothing better than to retire again. Since that is impossible, you just go about your duty and try to help your comrades survive.

Roleplaying Tips: You were nearly 70 when you died, and though you don't feel the aches and pains of old age, you feel the mental fatigue of every one of your years. You are something of a curmudgeon and the naive enthusiasm of many younger Legionnaires often drives you to distraction. You go out of your way to burst the balloons of idealism and quash any "gung-ho" attitudes you come across. Despite your outward crustiness, you are willing to share your military expertise with those who need it (and these days, it seems to be almost everyone). Grumble, but do your job.

Relics: Purple Heart medal

Marath

THE OBLIVION

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: CAREGIVER
Demeanor: CURMUDGEON
Shadow: DIRECTOR

Life: UNIVERSAL SOLDIER
Death: OLD AGE
Regret: COULDN'T KEEP KIDS
OUT OF THE ARMY

Attributes

Physical

Strength
Dexterity
Stamina

Social

Charisma
Manipulation
Appearance

Mental

Perception
Intelligence
Wits

Abilities

Talents

Alertness
Athletics
Awareness
Brawl
Dodge
Empathy
Expression
Intimidation
Streetwise
Subterfuge

Skills

Crafts
Drive
Etiquette
Firearms
Leadership
Meditation
Melee
Performance
Repair
Stealth

Knowledge

Bureaucracy
Computer
Enigmas
Investigation
Law
Linguistics
Medicine
Occult
Politics
Science

Advantages

Backgrounds

ALLIES
HAUNT
MEMORIAM
STATUS
CONTACTS (SHADOWLANDS)
 〇〇〇〇〇
 〇〇〇〇〇

Passions

DEGLORIFY WAR
(DISILLUSION)
PROTECT COMRADES (DUTY)
PROTECT CHILDREN (LOVE)
INSTRUCT YOUNG
LEGIONNAIRES (HOPE)
 〇〇〇〇〇
 〇〇〇〇〇
 〇〇〇〇〇

Fetters

FAMILY
GARDEN
WAR MEMORABILIA
OLD ARMY CAMP
SITE IN VIETNAM
OLD UNIFORM
NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS
 〇〇〇〇〇

Arcanos

ARGOS
CASTIGATE
EMBODY
 〇〇〇〇〇
 〇〇〇〇〇
 〇〇〇〇〇

Corpus

Willpower
 〇〇〇〇〇〇〇
 〇〇〇〇〇〇〇
 〇〇〇〇〇〇〇
 〇〇〇〇〇〇〇

Angst

● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
Thorns
BAD LUCK, AURA OF CORRUPTION (EXTREME DECREPITUDE), SHADOW LIFE

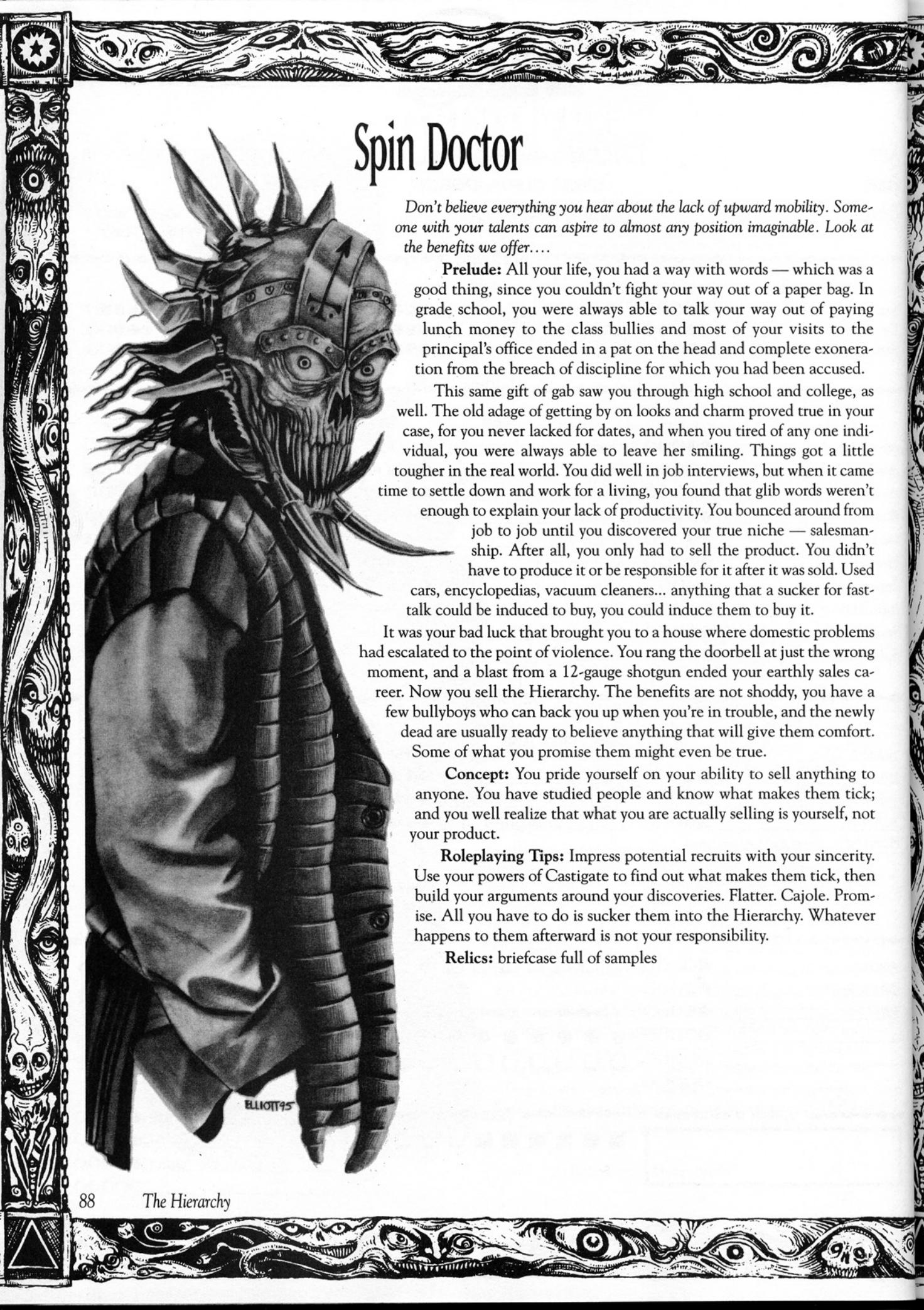
Experience

Pathos

Pathos
 □□□□□□□□□□

Dark Passions

MISINFORM YOUNG
LEGIONNAIRES (MALICE)
AROUSE WAR-LUST (LUST)
DEFECT FROM THE
LEGIONS (GUILT)
 〇〇〇〇〇



Spin Doctor

Don't believe everything you hear about the lack of upward mobility. Someone with your talents can aspire to almost any position imaginable. Look at the benefits we offer....

Prelude: All your life, you had a way with words — which was a good thing, since you couldn't fight your way out of a paper bag. In grade school, you were always able to talk your way out of paying lunch money to the class bullies and most of your visits to the principal's office ended in a pat on the head and complete exoneration from the breach of discipline for which you had been accused.

This same gift of gab saw you through high school and college, as well. The old adage of getting by on looks and charm proved true in your case, for you never lacked for dates, and when you tired of any one individual, you were always able to leave her smiling. Things got a little tougher in the real world. You did well in job interviews, but when it came time to settle down and work for a living, you found that glib words weren't enough to explain your lack of productivity. You bounced around from job to job until you discovered your true niche — salesmanship. After all, you only had to sell the product. You didn't have to produce it or be responsible for it after it was sold. Used cars, encyclopedias, vacuum cleaners... anything that a sucker for fast-talk could be induced to buy, you could induce them to buy it.

It was your bad luck that brought you to a house where domestic problems had escalated to the point of violence. You rang the doorbell at just the wrong moment, and a blast from a 12-gauge shotgun ended your earthly sales career. Now you sell the Hierarchy. The benefits are not shoddy, you have a few bullyboys who can back you up when you're in trouble, and the newly dead are usually ready to believe anything that will give them comfort. Some of what you promise them might even be true.

Concept: You pride yourself on your ability to sell anything to anyone. You have studied people and know what makes them tick; and you well realize that what you are actually selling is yourself, not your product.

Roleplaying Tips: Impress potential recruits with your sincerity. Use your powers of Castigate to find out what makes them tick, then build your arguments around your discoveries. Flatter. Cajole. Promise. All you have to do is sucker them into the Hierarchy. Whatever happens to them afterward is not your responsibility.

Relics: briefcase full of samples

Parraith

THE OBLIVION

Name: **PRAGMATIST**
 Player: **AVANT-GARDE**
 Chronicle: **RATIONALIST**

Life: **SALES SPECIALIST**
 Death: **ACCIDENTAL VIOLENCE**
 Regret: **NOT SELLING SOMEONE
THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE**

Attributes

Physical

Strength **●●○○○**
 Dexterity **●●○○○**
 Stamina **●●○○○**

Social

Charisma **●●●○○**
 Manipulation **●●●○○**
 Appearance **●●●○○**

Mental

Perception **●●○○○**
 Intelligence **●●○○○**
 Wits **●●○○○**

Abilities

Talents

Alertness **●●○○○**
 Athletics **○○○○○**
 Awareness **●○○○○**
 Brawl **○○○○○**
 Dodge **●●○○○**
 Empathy **●○○○○**
 Expression **●●●○○**
 Intimidation **●○○○○**
 Streetwise **●○○○○**
 Subterfuge **●●●○○**

Skills

Crafts **○○○○○**
 Drive **●●○○○**
 Etiquette **●●●○○**
 Firearms **●○○○○**
 Leadership **●○○○○**
 Meditation **○○○○○**
 Melee **○○○○○**
 Performance **●●●○○**
 Repair **○○○○○**
 Stealth **○○○○○**

Knowledge

Bureaucracy **●●○○○**
 Computer **●●○○○**
 Enigmas **●○○○○**
 Investigation **●○○○○**
 Law **○○○○○**
 Linguistics **●○○○○**
 Medicine **○○○○○**
 Occult **○○○○○**
 Politics **●○○○○**
 Science **○○○○○**

Advantages

Backgrounds

CONTACTS (SHADOWLANDS) **●●●○○**
 HAUNT **●●○○○**
 STATUS **●○○○○**
 WEALTH **●●○○○**
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○

Passions

SELL THE PRODUCT
-HIERARCHY (PRIDE) **●●●●○**
 ADVANCE SELF (GREED) **●●●○○**
 AVENGE MURDER (ANGER) **○○○○○**
 HELP OLD PARTNER
(AFFECTION) **●●○○○**
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○

Fetters

SALES PERSON OF
THE YEAR PIN **●●●●○**
 OLD HOME **●●○○○**
 CAR **●○○○○**
 SALES PARTNER **●●○○○**
 MURDER WEAPON
(SHOTGUN) **●○○○○**
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○

Arcanos

ARGOS **●●○○○**
 EMBODY **●●●○○**
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○

Corpus

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
 Willpower
 ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Angst

● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Thorns

Tainted Relic (Handgun), Trick of
the Light, Badluck, Doppleganger

Experience

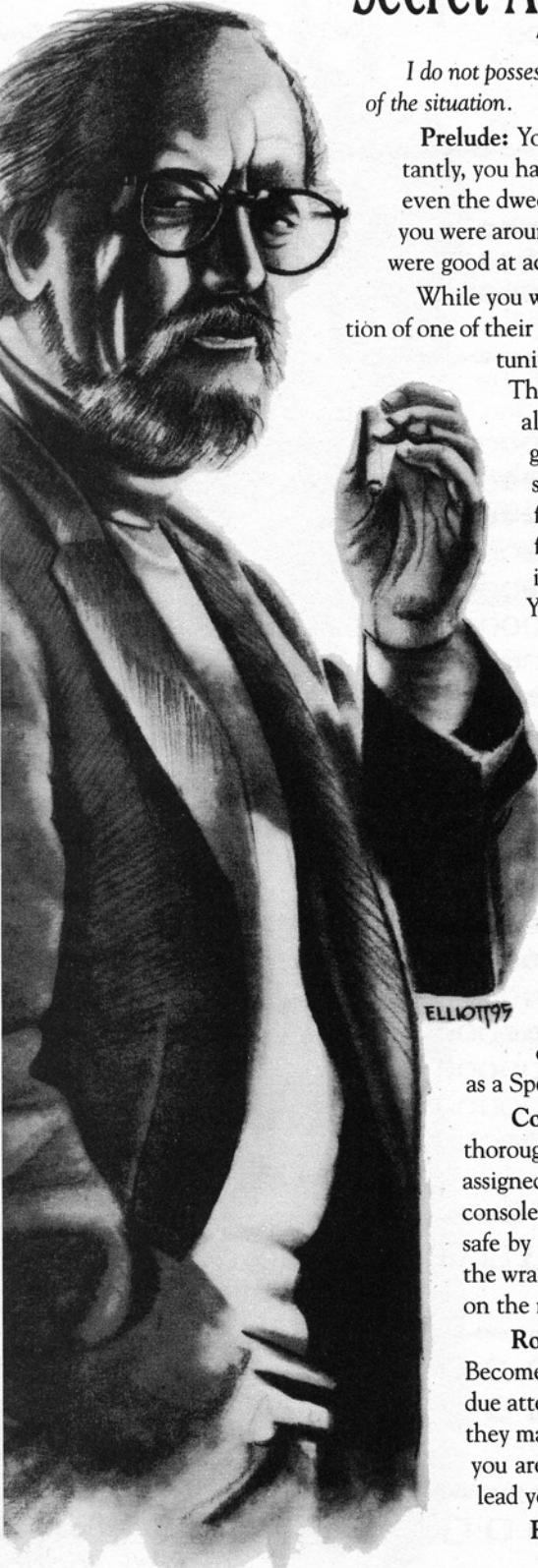
Experience **○○○○○**
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○

Pathos

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Dark Passions

SELL THE HIERARCHY
SHORT (CONTempt) **●●●●○**
 RUIN YOUR PARTNER (ENVY) **●●●○○**
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○



Secret Agent

I do not possess such information, and if I did, I would be forced to disavow all knowledge of the situation.

Prelude: You were a smart kid and always did well in school. Even more importantly, you had the ability to fit in with any crowd: the brains, the jocks, the goths, even the dweebs. You unconsciously adopted their looks and mannerisms as long as you were around them — like changing into and out of costumes for the theatre. You were good at acting, too.

While you were in college, some ROTC friends of yours brought you to the attention of one of their instructors. He talked with you awhile and then offered you the opportunity to join a very special branch of the military: the intelligence corps.

The next thing you knew, you were not only in the army, but you were also a spy. Along with basic training, you took intensive courses in languages (you know three besides English), computers and a whole set of subjects you think of as "secret agent stuff." Then they put you in the field, working on military bases where the brass suspected classified information leaks. Later you traveled to Europe, where your job was to infiltrate various anti-American terrorist groups and sabotage their plans. Your chameleonlike nature, enhanced by your new skills, enabled you to fake a number of nationalities long enough to get your job done.

At first you thought your failing health was due to bad European diets, long nights in smoky bistros, and a general lack of adequate rest. When you collapsed on a Berlin street during an anti-nuclear protest, you woke up in a hospital. Not only was your cover blown, but blood tests marked you as HIV positive. The AIDS virus ravaged your system so quickly there wasn't even time to deport you. You never even got to deliver your final report.

Here in the Shadowlands, you don't have to worry about getting sick anymore. There's even a job for you to do that fits right in with all your training. You work for the Hierarchy, but only you (and your superiors) know that. Your current group of companions believes you are a Renegade; the last one thought you were a devoted member of their cult. Maybe someday you'll be good enough to pass yourself off as a Spectre.

Concept: You are a consummate actor; your role becomes your life. You so thoroughly absorb the manners and mores of whatever group you have been assigned to infiltrate that sometimes you regret having to betray them. You console yourself with the thought that you are helping to keep the Hierarchy safe by rooting out undesirables. You try not to think about what happens to the wraiths you deliver into the hands of the Legions. Instead, you concentrate on the next assignment, the next role, the next betrayal....

Roleplaying Tips: Edge your way into the center of your current group. Become everybody's friend, but no one's close companion. Avoid calling undue attention to yourself; let others take the lead, and then watch every move they make. Avoid overacting. Follow the crowd, but always keep in mind that you are the real leader and that eventually, when the time is right, you will lead your peers straight into the waiting shackles of the Legions.

Relics: codebook

Marath

THE OBLIVION

Name:
Player:
Chronicle

Nature: ANALYST
Demeanor: CONFORMIST
Shadow: TORTURER

Life: SPY
Death: AIDS VICTIM (DISEASE)
Regret: DYING TOO SOON

Attributes

Physical	Social	Mental			
Strength _____	●●○○○	Charisma _____	●●●○○	Perception _____	●●●○○
Dexterity _____	●●●○○	Manipulation _____	●●●○○	Intelligence _____	●●●●○
Stamina _____	●●○○○	Appearance _____	●●○○○	Wits _____	●●●○○

Abilities

Skills	Knowledge
Alertness	●●○○○
Athletics	○○○○○
Awareness	○○○○○
Brawl	●○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○
Empathy	○○○○○
Expression	●○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○
Streetwise	●●○○○
Subterfuge	●○○○○
Crafts	○○○○○
Drive	●●○○○
Etiquette	●●●○○
Firearms	●○○○○
Leadership	●○○○○
Meditation	○○○○○
Melee	○○○○○
Performance (ACTING)	●●●○○
Repair	○○○○○
Stealth	●●●○○
Bureaucracy	●○○○○
Computer	●○○○○
Enigmas	●○○○○
Investigation	●○○○○
Law	○○○○○
Linguistics	●●●○○
Medicine	○○○○○
Occult	○○○○○
Politics	●○○○○
Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds	Passions	Fetters
ALLIES	●●○○○ EXCEL IN YOUR ROLE OF THE MOMENT (PRIDE)	●●●●○ PASSPORT(S)
CONTACTS	●●○○○ WATCH OVER SICK MORTALS (CARING)	●●○○○ FAMILY
HAUNT	●●○○○ EXPOSE ENEMIES OF THE HIERARCHY (LOYALTY)	●●○○○ BISTRO IN PARIS
MEMORIAM	●○○○○ DON'T GET CAUGHT (FEAR)	●○○○○ LOCAL THEATRE
	○○○○○	○○○○○ HOSPITAL WHERE YOU DIED
	○○○○○	○○○○○
	○○○○○	○○○○○

Arcanos

Experience

Experience

Pathos

Dark Passions

BLOW YOUR COVER (GUILT) ●●●○○

TERRORIZE SICK MORTALS (ANGER) ●○○○○

BETRAY THE HIERARCHY (SELF-HATE) ●○○○○

OOOOO

Traditionalist

Old fashioned values have withstood the test of time. I see no reason to adopt every newfangled notion that comes across the Shroud just because it signifies change.

Prelude: You grew up in comfortable surroundings. Your parents instilled in you the importance of traditional virtues such as thrift, hard work and responsibility. You knew that if you studied hard, made the right friends, and behaved yourself, you would enjoy a satisfying and productive life.

In school, you avoided the fast crowd and the ever-changing fads, concentrating on things that had lasting significance: good literature, classical music and tasteful clothes. You chose your boyfriends carefully, according to their grade-point average, gentlemanly behavior and career aspirations. You knew you wanted a college education followed by a career, marriage, motherhood and a pleasant retirement for you and your husband — in that order. You managed your first three goals easily. You and Eric planned to start a family as soon as his income would allow you to quit work. You bought a brick house in the suburbs, joined the local Symphony Guild and the League of Women Voters, and waited confidently for the rest of your plans to unfold. It should have all worked out beautifully.

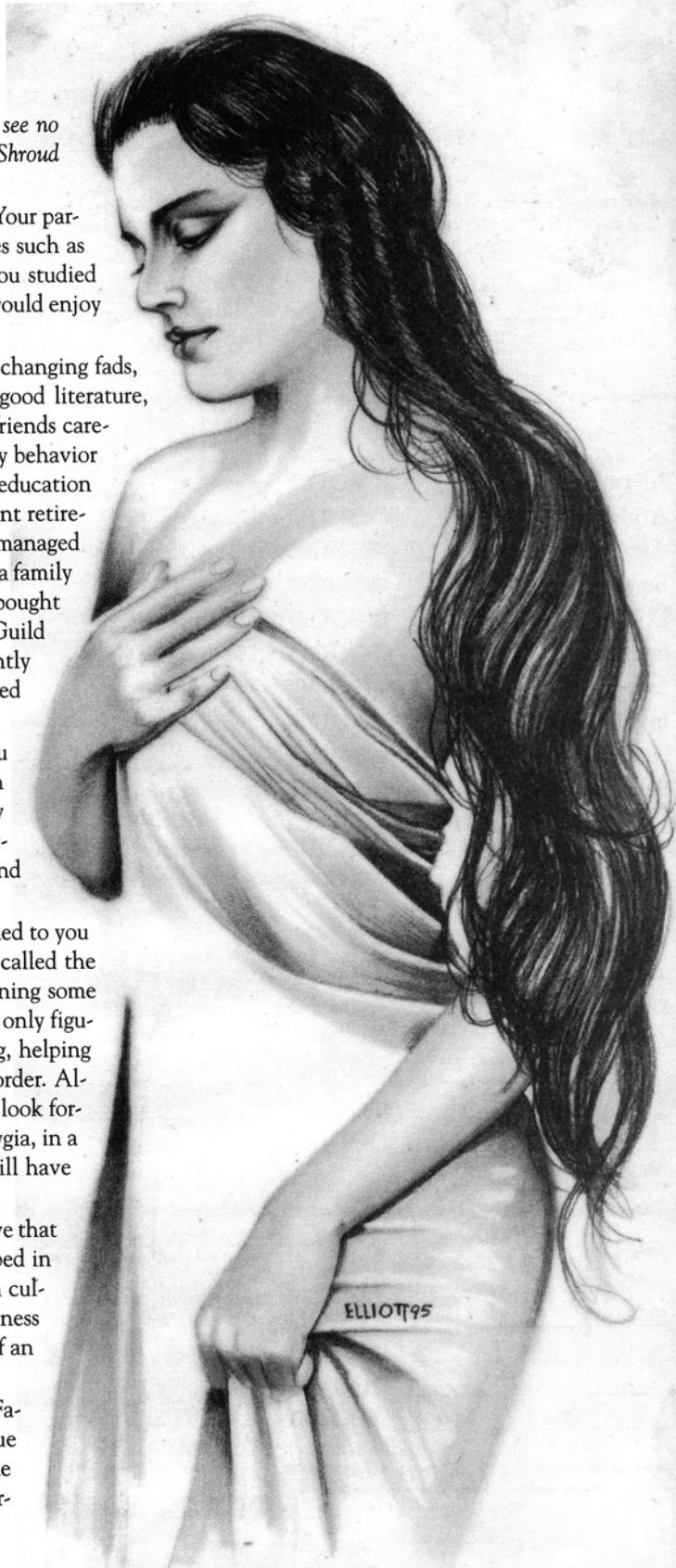
You still don't know how you died. One minute you were standing in a long supermarket line gossiping with your next-door neighbor, and the next thing you knew you were wandering through a shadowy landscape, frightened and confused by the strange noises that were all around you.

Your Reaper was a kindly older woman who explained to you that you were dead and that you belonged to someone called the Beggar Lord. You weren't thrilled by the thought of joining some Legion of Paupers, but she assured you that the title was only figurative. You serve in the Hierarchy's administrative wing, helping to keep the routine affairs of your Necropolis in good order. Although motherhood is out of the question, you can still look forward (you hope) to a pleasant retirement, perhaps in Stygia, in a few hundred years. Even in death, traditional virtues still have their rewards.

Concept: You are a staunch conservative. You believe that the Hierarchy represents the values to which you ascribed in life. You work hard, and strive to improve yourself both culturally and socially. You dislike rebellion and disorderliness in any shape or form and are only too glad to be a part of an institution that strives to perpetuate stability.

Roleplaying Tips: Always uphold the status quo. Favor traditionalism over change and the tried-and-true methods over irresponsible experimentation. Cultivate the eternal virtues of loyalty, industry, and courtesy in yourself and encourage them in others. Never be vulgar.

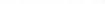
Relics: wedding ring, shopping cart



Shariah

Name: NATURE: TRADITIONALIST Life: TRADITIONALIST
Player: Demeanor: CONFORMIST Death: MYSTERY
Chronicle: Shadow: ANARCHIST Regret: NOT COMPLETING THE

Attributes

Physical	Social	Mental
Strength 	Charisma 	Perception 
Dexterity 	Manipulation 	Intelligence 
Stamina 	Appearance 	Wits 

Abilities

talents	Skills	Knowledge			
Alertness	●●○○○	Crafts	●●○○○	Bureaucracy	●●○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Drive	●●○○○	Computer	●○○○○
Awareness	●○○○○	Etiquette	●●●○○	Enigmas	●○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Law	●○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Meditation	●○○○○	Linguistics	●●●○○
Expression	●○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Performance	●○○○○	Occult	●●○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Repair	○○○○○	Politics	●○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Science	●●○○○

Advantages

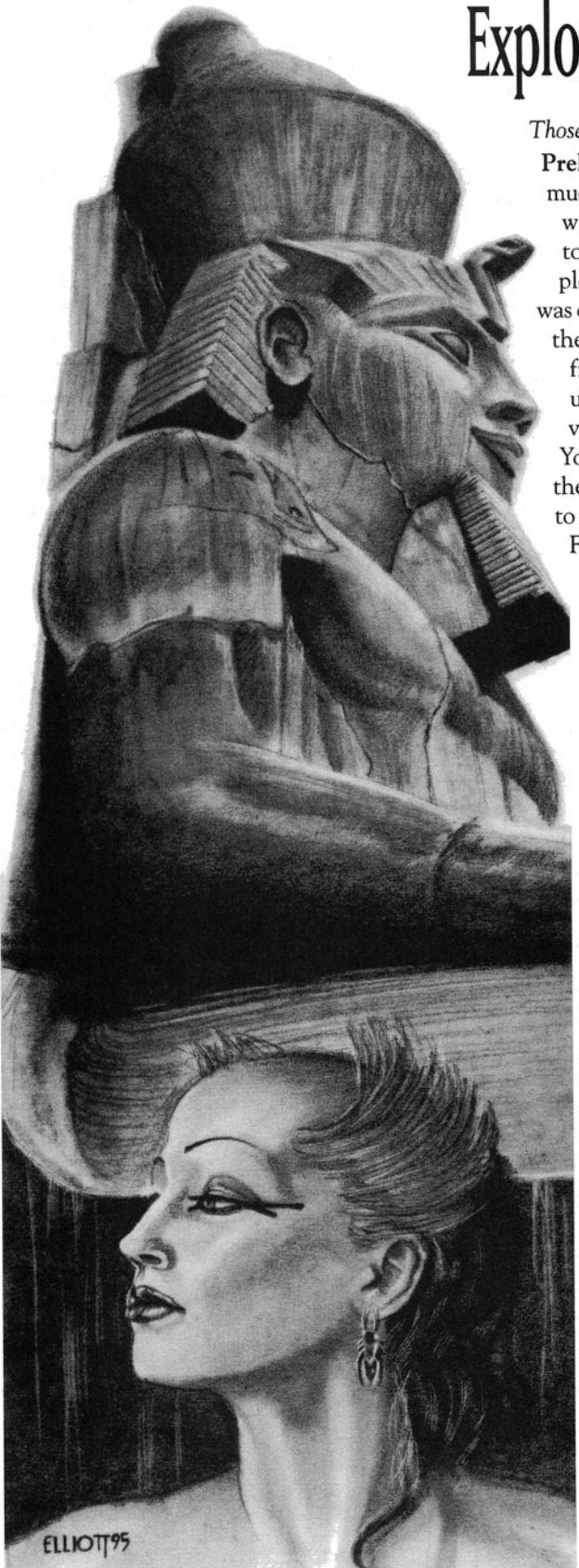
Backgrounds	Passions		Fetters
EIDOLON	●●●●●	WATCH OVER YOUR HUSBAND (LOVE)	●●●●●
HAUNT	●●●●○	ATTEND THE SYMPHONY AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE (PRIDE)	●●●●○
MENTOR	●○○○○	PROMOTE TRADITIONAL VIRTUES AMONG YOUR COHORTS (HOPE)	●●○○○
STATUS (HIERARCHY)	●●●●○	FIND OUT HOW YOU DIED (CURIOSITY)	●○○○○
	○○○○○	○○○○○	○○○○○
	○○○○○	○○○○○	○○○○○
	○○○○○	○○○○○	○○○○○

1 Arcanos

ARGOS	●○○○○	□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □	● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○
EMBODY	●●○○○	□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
KEENING	●○○○○	✖✖✖✖✖	Willpower ✖✖✖✖✖
PUPPETRY	●○○○○	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○	Thorns
	○○○○○	□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □	DARK ALLIES, SHADOW TRAITS
	○○○○○	□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □	(STREETWISE), PACT OF DOOM, INFAMY

Experience

A horizontal bar consisting of a black rectangle on the left, followed by a series of black and white squares in the center, and the text 'FLAUNT TRADITION (SELF-HATE)' with a checkmark on the right.



Explorer

Those who claim there is nowhere left to explore have never seen Death.

Prelude: Many times, you thought you should have been born much earlier — like the 16th century. You had a fascination with seeking out new places, and always desired to be the first to discover something novel and wonderful. The Age of Exploration practically had your name stamped on it, except it was over centuries before your birth. By the time you came along, the Earth seemed to be running out of new places for you to find. Exploring every nook and cranny of your city kept you under control while you were in junior high, but you were venturing further afield by the time you reached college age. You hurried to prepare yourself for a life of adventure before the opportunity was gone, and began by taking a freighter out to the Far East after earning a degree in history and geography.

For the next several years, you lived on the edge (sometimes literally so), surviving day to day as you discovered new points of interest. You even became a reasonably good amateur mapmaker.

Your death was slow and horrible after you were caught in the middle of an ebola outbreak while visiting Africa. Your Reaper was a woman of the Ivory Kingdom who brought you to the Stygian representative of a nearby African Necropolis. It was he who sent you to your "rightful claimant" (his words) in Stygia, the Skeletal Lord. As you journeyed through these strange lands, accompanied by various guides, you realized that not everything in the world had been discovered and claimed. Here was an entirely different world waiting to be seen, explored, named and mapped.

When you arrived in Stygia and met with the Skeletal Lord, you offered to penetrate and begin to map the Ivory Kingdom. The Deathlord was impressed by your "go-get-em" attitude, studied your previous works and finally agreed to fund your first expedition. Politics and guard duty were never your style. Your work lies elsewhere.

Concept: You are never truly happy unless you're on the move, often literally. You hate to be stuck or held up, unless it's by your own choice. You're always anxious to move on to the next new adventure. "Been there, done that," is a phrase you hope you never have to say.

Roleplaying Tips: Having traveled to so many different places, you frequently drop foreign words and phrases into your normal speech and slip in and out of accents. Your energy is boundless, sometimes so much so that others get tired just watching you. Perk up immediately at the mention of any place of which you have not heard or explored.

Relics: Mapmaking tools

Wraith

THE OBLIVION

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: ARCHITECT
Demeanor: AVANT-GARDE
Shadow: THE PERFECTIONIST

Life: EXPLORER
Death: DISEASE
Regret: NEVER FINDING AN UNEXPLORED PLACE IN THE SKINLANDS

Attributes

Physical

Strength
Dexterity
Stamina

Social

Charisma
Manipulation
Appearance

Mental

Perception
Intelligence
Wits

Abilities

Talents

Alertness
Athletics
Awareness
Brawl
Dodge
Empathy
Expression
Intimidation
Streetwise
Subterfuge

Skills

Crafts
Drive
Etiquette
Firearms
Leadership
Meditation
Melee
Performance
Repair
Stealth

knowledge

Cartography
Computer
Enigmas
Geography
History
Investigation
Linguistics
Medicine
Occult
Politics

Advantages

Backgrounds

ALLIES
CONTACTS
HAUNT
STATUS (HIERARCHY)

Passions

MAPPING OUT THE DEADLANDS (PRIDE)
NAMING A SPOT AFTER YOURSELF (PRIDE)
FIND WHERE THE EBOLA ORIGINATES (FEAR)
PROTECT RELIEF WORKERS (HOPE)

Fetters

"POTTER'S FIELD" GRAVE IN AFRICA
HIKING BOOTS
COMPASS (BURIED WITH YOU)

Arcanos

ARGOS
MOLIATE
PUPPETRY

Corpus

Willpower

Angst

Angst

Thorns

Thorns
DARK ALLIES, TAINTED RELIC (SEXTANT),
SHADOW TRAIT (OCCULT), SHADOW CALL

Experience

Pathos

Pathos

Dark Passions

Dark Passions
UNLEASH THE EBOLA ON THE WORLD (REVENGE)
GIVE UP EXPLORATION (PAIN)

Deathlord Servant

My mistress is indisposed. Anything you have to say may be addressed to me, and I will be certain she receives the message.

Prelude: You lived your life a lot closer to the edge than you would have liked. A vampire ghouled you to run his household, and you were so efficient at it that he trained you to become his assistant. Anything that needed doing, you saw to it, and very soon you had made yourself indispensable. You had to, because you knew what would happen if you faltered for even a minute — the screams that came from the basement were unmistakable. However, all your legendary indispensability couldn't save you when your master killed you in a frenzy of hunger. Eight minutes was all it took for half your blood to be drunk and the other half to soak into the Persian rug which you'd just had cleaned that day.

One of the first things you saw of Stygia was the soulforges, and this is something that you will never forget. The screams, the blatant pain and suffering — it reminded you too much of your former life. As representatives from the Laughing Lady and Smiling Lord contested over you, you made quite a spectacle of yourself, begging not to be smelted and presenting a list of qualifications that made both blink. You were finally sent to the Seat of Succor, where you presented yourself again and managed to make a favorable impression. Ever since that day, you have worked in the Deathlord's palace, gaining the trust of all through your diligent work and discretion. Your tendency to listen, rather than speak, has brought you many rewards in the form of interesting information and expressions of disloyal opinions that should not have been aired in your hearing. Since then, you have slowly gained the confidence of your mistress, whom you have no intention of betraying, and have become one of the most trusted members of her household. You even have the authority to speak in her name under certain circumstances, although you are careful not to abuse the privilege.

Your new employer is unaware of the nature of her predecessor, and the rumors of a vampire enclave in the Tempest make you shudder. You have been trying for some time to ease yourself into the most secret of conversations, in order to insert your opinion about these creatures without drawing too much attention to yourself.

Concept: At first, being part of the Hierarchy was just another job, although you realize that without your mistress' intervention, you could have landed in the forges. Over time, your service has instilled in you a loyalty borne not of fear, but of respect, even if your mistress is a little erratic at times. You will not listen to others' criticisms of the Hierarchy or your mistress, and you have very little time for disrespectful wraiths who mock either.

Roleplaying Tips: You listen more often than you speak and are aware of everything around you. When you do speak, use quiet tones and choose your words carefully so that nothing untoward may be read into them. Never let it be known that something you hear affects you, especially any mention of vampires. Always reflect the dignity of your position and your employer.

Relics: Laptop computer, lapel brooch



Scraith

THE OBLIVION

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: SURVIVOR
Demeanor: DIRECTOR
Shadow: LEECH

Life: PROFESSIONAL
Death: MURDER
Regret: NOT GETTING OUT OF
GHOUL-DOM

Attributes

Physical	Social	Mental			
Strength _____	●●○○○	Charisma _____	●●●○○	Perception _____	●●●○○
Dexterity _____	●●○○○	Manipulation _____	●●○○○	Intelligence _____	●●●○○
Stamina _____	●●○○○	Appearance _____	●●○○○	Wits _____	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents	Skills	knowledge			
Alertness	●●●OO	Crafts	OOOOO	Bureaucracy	●●OOO
Athletics	OOOOO	Drive	●OOOO	Computer	●●OOO
Awareness	●●OOO	Etiquette	●●●OO	Enigmas	●OOOO
Brawl	OOOOO	Firearms	OOOOO	Investigation	OOOOO
Dodge	●●OOO	Leadership	●●OOO	Law	OOOOO
Empathy	●OOOO	Meditation	OOOOO	Linguistics	●●OOO
Expression	●●OOO	Melee	OOOOO	Medicine	OOOOO
Intrigue	●●OOO	Performance	OOOOO	Occult	●●●OO
Streetwise	OOOOO	Repair	OOOOO	Politics	OOOOO
Subterfuge	●●OOO	Stealth	●●OOO	Science	OOOOO

Advantages

••••• Arcanos

CASTIGATE	●●○○○	□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □	● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
INHABIT	●○○○○		□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □	
PHANTASM	●○○○○	○○○○○	Willpower	○○○○○
LIFEWEB	●○○○○	● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○	Thorns	
	○○○○○	□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □	INFAMY, DEATH'S SIGIL (BITE MARK ON NECK), TAINTED TOUCH	
	○○○○○	□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □		

Experience

A horizontal progress bar. On the left is a large empty rectangular box. To its right is a sequence of squares: five solid black ones, followed by four empty ones, then a series of text labels. The text labels are: 'THROW YOURSELF INTO THE SOULFORGES (PAIN)' followed by four empty squares, and 'JOIN THE VAMPIRES (RAGE)' followed by four empty squares. Below the text is a row of four empty squares.



Legendary Hierarchs

O dark dark dark, They all go into the dark,
The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into the vacant,
The captains, merchant bankers, eminent men of letters,
The generous patrons of art, the statesmen and the rulers,
Distinguished civil servants, chairmen of many committees,
Industrial lords and petty contractors, all go into the dark...
— T. S. Eliot, "East Coker," *Four Quartets*



While most wraiths think of the Hierarchy as a collection of nameless, faceless bureaucrats and soldiers, there is in truth a great deal more to the individuals who comprise the organization. The awesome personality of Charon has, unfortunately, dwarfed the accomplishments of other Hierarchy wraiths, whose contributions and eccentricities have served to set them apart from their peers.

The Hierarchy includes a wide variety of individuals, many of whom do not seem to fall into the acknowledged stereotype. The wraiths described in the pages that follow may not change the course of Underworld politics or policies, but they have certainly left their mark upon the lands beyond the Shroud.

Hypatia

Born in 370 A.D. in the city of Alexandria, a great center of culture, science and learning, Hypatia received the best education her father, the mathematician and astronomer Theon, could provide for her. In an era in which women were largely denied the rights to an education, Hypatia was a shining exception. Intelligence, beauty and charm combined with an inborn curiosity about the nature of the physical universe to produce a woman who was not only a true scholar but also a scientist, teacher, and advocate of learning.

During her lifetime, Hypatia studied and published papers in the fields of mathematics, conic theory, philosophy, mechanics and astronomy. A strong proponent of NeoPlatonism, she had friends among the scientists, philosophers and civil magistrates of Alexandria. Unfortu-



nately, the rise of Christianity brought with it a rejection of pagan thought — particularly the NeoPlatonist school, which emphasized reason and science over faith and mysticism. Hypatia's friendship with Orestes, the Roman Prefect of Alexandria, resulted in a growing enmity between her and the followers of the Patriarch of Alexandria, a fanatical sect of monks dedicated to eradicating the heresy of NeoPlatonism. Hypatia's refusal to convert to the Christian faith resulted in her brutal murder at the hands of these zealots, who pulled her from her chariot, dragged her into a church and flayed her alive.

Although Hypatia's martyrdom in 412 A.D. constituted a great loss for the mortal world and presaged both the end of Platonic teachings and the beginning of the Dark Ages, her arrival in the Underworld meant that a much-needed wealth of knowledge would come into Charon's hands. The Lord of Stygia welcomed Hypatia into his city with open arms. It is said that Charon offered her a position as one of his select advisors, but that she turned him down, unwilling to put herself at risk in her new existence by meddling in political affairs. Instead, Hypatia requested that she be allowed to continue her studies and bring the light of learning into the darkness of the Underworld.

Today, Hypatia occupies the prestigious position of Magister of the Great Library of Stygia, formerly the library of Ptolemy I in Alexandria. Within the confines of its alabaster halls, she oversees the accumulation and preservation of the world's greatest collection of written works, a body which contains not only the library's original contents, brought into the Underworld by their fiery destruction in the Skinlands, but the posthumous works of thousands of thinkers, writers, historians and scientists as well. Even today it is said that although the Deathlords rule in Stygia, in the Great Library, Hypatia's law is supreme.

Although she is one of the Underworld's oldest wraiths, Hypatia still maintains strong connections with the Shadowlands. In recent years, a revival of interest in women's history has led her to acquire massive amounts of Memoriam. It is even thought that, should she so desire, Hypatia — unlike many other Stygian Gaunts — could travel through the Shadowlands and beyond the Shroud into the Skinlands themselves.

Alonso de Nemesio (Alonso the Just)

The Spanish Inquisition of the 15th century served a number of purposes. Revived at the instigation of their royal majesties Ferdinand and Isabella, the Inquisition sought to combat the growing tide of recidivism among Jewish converts and to root out heresy within the Church itself. Under the leadership of Torquemada, the Grand Inquisitor, the Inquisition eventually became a potent tool of the Spanish government. Much of the political power



wielded by the Inquisition was attained through the work of one Alonso de Nemesio, a fellow Dominican who served Torquemada as an advisor and sometime confessor.

Fra Alonso quickly saw how the Church, which was always in need of funds and political backing, could become indispensable to the government of Spain. Although he bore no personal animosity toward Jews, Protestants, Moors or even witches, he firmly believed that the resources they controlled would better serve Spanish interests if transferred into loyal Catholic hands. Alonso remained quietly in the background as Torquemada's Inquisition rose in power, always ready to offer counsel to his superior and direct him gently in ways that would win him even greater political influence.

Although he did his best to keep himself above suspicion and to stay out of the direct lines of power, Alonso nevertheless made many enemies both within the Church and among those he persecuted. No one is quite certain which group administered the lethal poison that cut his life of quiet manipulation short. Some even suspect that Torquemada himself may have grown wary of the man to whom he regularly confessed his sins.

Joining the Hierarchy was a natural step for Alonso, although it took every bit of his persuasive abilities to convince the rulers of Stygia that his priestly calling did not make him one of the hated Fishers. He proved his loyalty to Charon and the Deathlords during the Renegade attack on the Onyx Tower, and earned a place in the Order of the Unlidded Eye as a reward for personally protecting some of Stygia's greatest treasures. His political astuteness soon resulted in his appointment to the Magisterium Veritatis itself, and he found himself once more in familiar territory as a member of the Underworld's Inquisition.

Today, Alonso oversees many of the Inquisitors assigned to the Necropoli of the United States. He has proven to be both an inspiration to his underlings and a flexible, pragmatic interpreter of official policies. His goal is to ensure that each investigation into Heretic activities in the Shadowlands turns a profit — either in thralls, oboli or favors. If a few Heretics slip through the cracks due to voluntary contributions to the Hierarchy, then so be it. He has amassed a sizable network of Renegades and Heretics whose lives he has spared and who are only too willing to betray their companions in return for continued amnesty.

Although he enjoys a great deal of power in Stygia and the Shadowlands, Alonso is beginning to attract the attention of other influential wraiths, most of whom either disapprove of his methods or envy his position. It is said that when he has occasion to visit the Great Library, Hypatia makes certain that she is unavailable to entertain him. Whether or not he will become the victim of his own machinations continues to be a matter of murmured speculation. So far, the odds — boosted by favors granted him by several of the Deathlords — are in his favor.

Heinrich von Zoller

During the rule of Frederick William I, called "The Soldiers' King," the army of Prussia was transformed from a disorderly collection of third-rate soldiers into the most highly disciplined body of skilled warriors in Europe. His son and successor, Frederick II (also known as Frederick the Great) made use of that elite military force in his war against Austria, winning for himself the fertile region of Silesia and the respect of the rest of the world.

One of his officers, a young nobleman named Heinrich von Zoller, distinguished himself during the eight-year War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748), and rose quickly through the ranks to achieve a position of command. Favored with exceptional good looks and a commanding physical stature, Heinrich embodied the Prussian military ideal — tall, blond, and nobly born. He seemed naturally gifted with a talent for military strategy and an ability to inspire loyalty in his troops. Unfortunately, his penchant for personally leading his soldiers into battle cost him his life.

Since his death, Heinrich von Zoller has served with distinction in the Legions of the Grim. As one of the commanders in charge of the Order of the Avenging Flame, he has led that elite group of Equitaes into battle with Spectres, often pursuing them to their lairs deep within the Tempest. The discipline shown by his knights serves as an example to all who battle to keep the Shadowlands free from Spectral ravagings.

Dark rumors circulate, however, about von Zoller's Shadow, a particularly insidious personality who would maneuver the knight into military decisions which, if carried out, could prove disastrous. Von Zoller always travels with a Pardoner, whose sole purpose is to keep the commander's Shadow under control, and to force it into submission when it threatens to surface.

Currently von Zoller and his knights have been placed on special assignment in the Shadowlands. Their mission, which, reputedly, was assigned personally by the Smiling Lord, is to visit the various Necropoli and assess the adequacy of their military defenses. He bears a writ which grants him emergency powers to restructure any Legions he finds lacking in discipline or training. Needless to say, his appearance on the outskirts of most cities in the Shadowlands sends the local authorities into a panic, as they frantically attempt to whip their armies into shape before von Zoller can do it for them.

Von Zoller, himself, seems oblivious to the less-than-warm reception he typically finds in the Necropoli he visits. He claims to have only the best interests of the Underworld's defenses at heart, and has no apparent desire to cause trouble for the Anacreons in the Shadowlands.

His method consists of announcing his presence to the proper Necropolitan authorities, calling for a review of the Legions, and then taking one or two Cohorts out for a patrol in the nearby Tempest. Upon their safe return (and he always returns the borrowed troops unharmed), he proposes to the Council of Anacreons any changes in training or discipline that he deems are warranted. Only a few perceptive (or paranoid) souls have claimed to notice subtle alterations in the personalities of the Cohorts who have served as his test subjects. Some have speculated privately that von Zoller is secretly training and indoctrinating a private army loyal only to him and that he plans to use this army to seize military control of Stygia. Others fear an even worse possibility — that von Zoller has sold out to the Spectres (for some never-quite-explained reason) and is insinuating Cohorts of Doppelgangers into the defenses of the Necropoli. Only time — and the next major Maelstrom — will tell.

Avery Fellowes

During the 16th and 17th centuries, the exploration and mapping of the world occupied the attention of many of the European powers. It seemed that there were always new lands to be discovered. Avery Fellowes accompanied John Cabot in his exploratory trips to Newfoundland and the New England coast, and the thrill of forging into the unknown changed the course of his life. When Cabot's expeditions came to an end, Fellowes refused to cease in his pursuit of new lands. Finding little support among his own countrymen, whose exploits paled in comparison to their Spanish, French, Portuguese and Dutch counterparts, Fellowes hired himself out as a mercenary to any nation who would give him the resources to conduct his own explorations.

His voyages took him to both North and South America, as well as to parts of Africa. When it became clear that his interests lay not in discovering gold, gems, spices or other marketable resources, but rather in stepping foot upon heretofore untraversed ground, his backers withdrew their support. On his last voyage, Fellowes' crew mutinied and abandoned him on an unexplored island in the West Indies — a victim of his own desire to confront the unknown. For three days and nights, Fellowes made his way through dense rainforest, living on the abundant fruit and marveling at the new sights that assailed him. On the fourth day, he fell prey to the wilderness he so admired, and died in agony from a scorpion's sting.

The vastness of the Tempest excites little fear in the wraith that Fellowes has become. He eagerly agreed to become part of the Emerald Legion, and volunteered at once to explore and map the uncharted regions which compose the bulk of the Underworld. His adventuresome

spirit and infectious enthusiasm convinced the commander of the Emerald Legion in the Necropolis of Miami of two things: that Fellowes deserved a chance to discover what lay in the Tempest surrounding the Shadowlands of Miami, and that the reckless wraith was better off as far away from the Necropolis as possible.

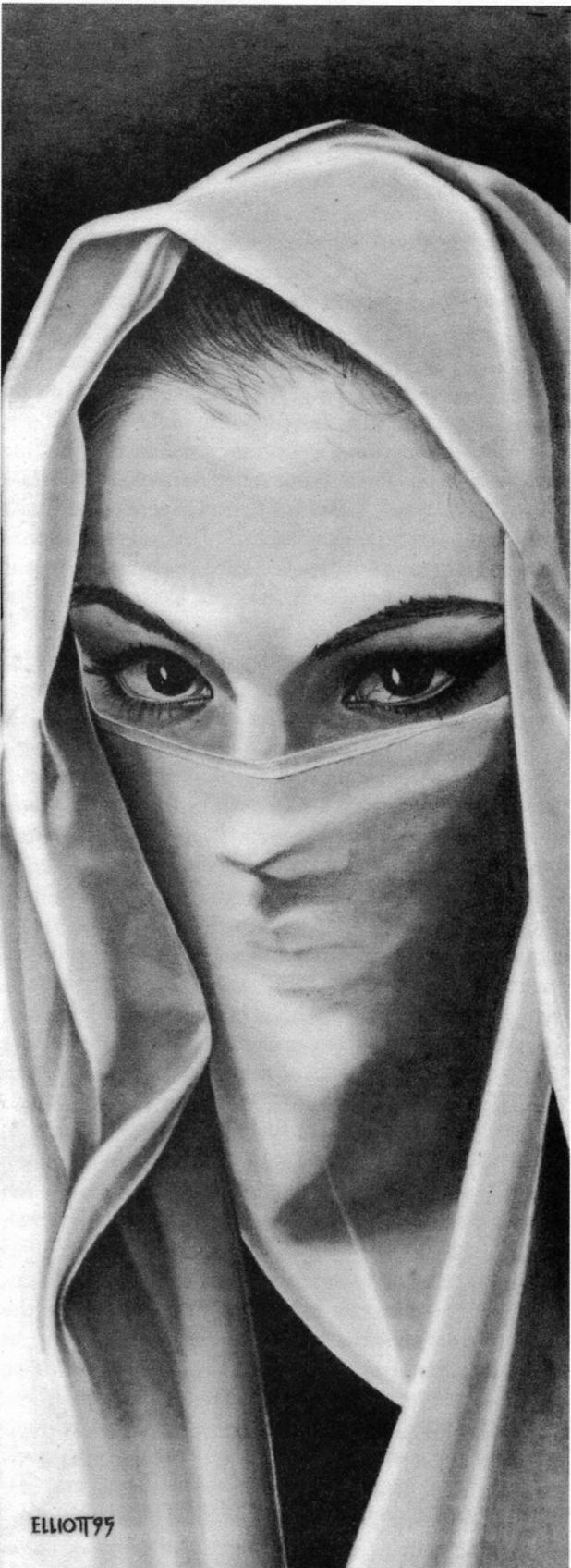
In the centuries that have passed since his appearance in the Underworld, Fellowes has achieved the distinction of being the Emerald Legion's premier scout. He now travels almost exclusively in the Tempest, always seeking out new routes between Necropoli. When he visits the Shadowlands to deliver reports on his discoveries, he spends a few days relaxing from the rigors of his duties. Or so he would have people think. In reality, Fellowes is a skinriding addict and has been since his death. His busman's holidays have taken him across the Louisiana Purchase with the Lewis and Clark Expedition, in search of the source of the Nile with David Livingstone, and to even more exotic places with Sir Richard Burton.

In recent years, the dearth of new places to explore has left Fellowes with only one possible outlet for his Skinlands exploits. As soon as manned space flights again become feasible, he intends to be the first wraith to explore the frontiers of outer space. Meanwhile he contents himself with the most recent experiments in manned probes of the ocean depths.

"Cassandra"

Few people believe that the wraith who calls herself "Cassandra" is, in reality, the doomed daughter of Priam, the king of Troy during the time of the ill-fated Trojan War. Like that prophetess of disaster, however, Cassandra seems destined to cry out her warnings to ears deafened by complacency. Her message is simple, and it is aimed at the Hierarchy, to which she still claims loyalty. The message is "Repent or pay the price for your folly."

Those who have actually seen her describe Cassandra as a slightly built young woman with long, dark hair and delicate features. She conceals the lower half of her face behind a veil, but her eyes are dark and luminous. She first came to the attention of the Underworld's powers-that-be shortly after the Deathlords assumed the reins of power in the wake of Charon's disappearance. At that time, she appeared in the Agora, Stygia's central square, holding a pair of flaming torches that shrieked in terrifying counterpoint to her words. She berated the Deathlords for abandoning the principles of their departed leader and for placing their own selfish desires for power ahead of any consideration for the well-being of the wraiths trapped between life and afterlife. She called for a renewal of Charon's vision, an end to the smelting of souls and the



liberation of all thralls. (For some reason, she continued to brandish her shrieking torches even through this section of her speech and beyond.)

She evaded immediate capture by the Stygian Legions by losing herself in the crowded backstreets of the city's labyrinthine lower quarters. Thereafter, she made periodic appearances in Stygia's public places, repeating her condemnation of the policies of the Deathlords and calling for the Hierarchy to return to the principles it once espoused. Finally the Ruling Council proclaimed her both a Renegade and a Heretic and banned her from the city.

Cassandra began visiting the Shadowlands, bringing her call for repentance and renewal to the Necropoli. Without exception, the Anacreons of each city she visited took actions to expel her from their territory. Numerous patrols have been sent to track her down and bring her in chains back to Stygia for trial and probable disorporation, but none of them have ever been able to discover the location of her Haunt or Haunts.

Despite her outlaw status, Cassandra continues to maintain that she is a true member of the Hierarchy. She has never actively supported any of the Hierarchy's enemies, nor has she participated in any actions (other than her constant speechmaking) directed against the government of Stygia. In fact, many disillusioned young Legionnaires have claimed that a clandestine visit from Cassandra helped to convince them to remain a part of the Hierarchy, and to strive to change the organization from within.

Some say that Cassandra works for the Lady of Fate, who protects her, and that she resides in a secret lair maintained by the Legions of Fate within the Tempest. Others insist that Cassandra has no actual Haunt but relies on her many hidden supporters among the citizenry of the Necropoli for shelter and protection. Still others claim to remember Cassandra from before she became a self-appointed voice in the wilderness and swear that she still maintains tacit ties with one or another of the Legions, secretly working to subvert the power of that Legion's adversaries. A few claim she is actually a Ferryman carrying out some agenda known only to those mysterious travelers. The truth of her identity and her loyalties may only come out when and if she is finally taken into custody. Until then, she remains a mystery.

General George S. Patton, Jr.

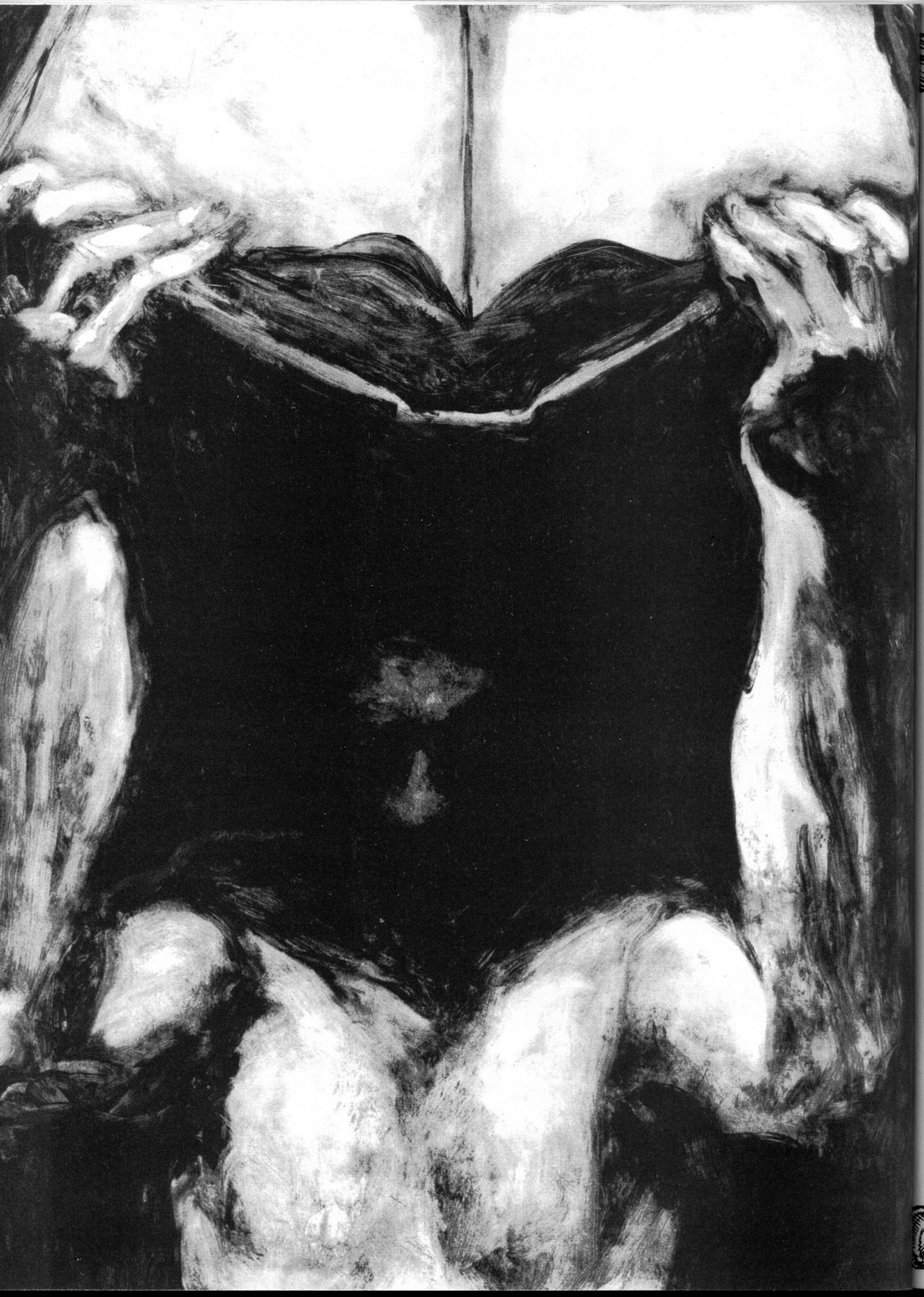
When the Fifth Great Maelstrom tore across the Underworld on August 9, 1945, it unleashed waves and waves of Spectres and other threats that refused to simply go away after Gorool's apparent destruction. Legionnaires were battling the twisted spirits continuously, defending Stygia and the Shadowlands from each successive Spectre attack. Anacreons worked feverishly to recruit as many stalwart Lemures and Enfants as they could, as wraith after wraith fell in battle. On December 21 of that year, they gained a soldier like no other.

General Patton had time and again distinguished himself for his aggressive, almost unpredictable tactics and impressive leadership in life. Before the end of World War II, he had risen to the rank of four-star general, and had commanded the 3rd Army as it slashed across Western Europe to the heart of enemy territory. Ultimately, though, a simple car accident succeeded where no German could, and the general crossed over to the Underworld.

Instantly, both the Beggar Lord and the Emerald Lord attempted to recruit him into their respective Legions. In his typically audacious manner, Patton refused to join either until he knew precisely where he was and what was going on. The Deathlords acquiesced, and escorted him to one of the battles, that he might observe the war against Oblivion firsthand.

Patton's decision didn't take long. He accepted rank within the Legion of Mystery (still suspicious of the exact cause of his accident) and began to fight the longest war of his career. His bold strategies proved to adapt easily to wraithly combat, and eventually the Spectres were beaten back into the Tempest.

Today, "Old Blood and Guts" holds the honorary rank of Overlord in the Legion of Mystery, but he isn't tied to any geographical location. Instead, he tours the Necropoli, pitching in with his crack squads wherever necessary and tutoring various commanders in the area. He is as outspoken, militarily and politically, as ever, and harbors no soft spots for the wraiths who would rather be fighting each other than Oblivion. As public figures in the Hierarchy go, almost none are more respected than he.



Appendix



Arcanos and the Hierarchy

Knowledge of the Arcanos abilities predates the founding of the guilds by several centuries. Although certain Arcanos have become closely associated with particular guilds, they are not the exclusive property of guild members. Indeed, since the guilds were disbanded, most wraiths have to learn these secret powers in other ways. Although the Hierarchy has officially banned certain Arcanos and only tolerates others, a few Arcanos play very important roles within the make-up of the Underworld's controlling faction.

Wraiths who are closely associated with the Hierarchy may learn some less common uses for certain Arcanos. In addition, some of the powers which have fallen into obscurity in favor of more modern devices may still prove useful in certain situations.

Hierarchy Arcanos

The following Arcanos powers can only be acquired legitimately by Hierarchy wraiths. Some of them were developed for use by Hierarchy troops at a time when Stygia could afford to provide her Legions with extensive training. Because most modern Hierarchy wraiths receive only the most basic grounding in the skills necessary for them to function as patrols, the majority of these arts have fallen into disuse or have been forgotten. Occasionally, a wraith character may come across an old veteran (in either the military or civil branch) who is willing to instruct them in these useful but non-essential powers.

Argos

••Return

This use of Argos allows a wraith to travel from her current location in the Tempest to her home base — either Stygia or a Necropolis — via the fastest (although not necessarily the safest) route. This had been part of the training of Centurions of Hierarchy patrols, before the road and rail system began to dwindle in its usefulness. As patrols find themselves required to brave the Tempest more frequently in pursuit of Spectres or other foes, the art of Return is enjoying a comeback.

System: The player must roll Dexterity + Argos (difficulty 7). Each success reduces the time necessary to travel to the desired destination, and five or more successes provides both the safest and fastest route. Success in a standard Orienteering roll before attempting to use this art lowers the difficulty by one for each success. A botch on the Return attempt indicates that the character becomes lost in the Tempest somewhere between her starting point and her goal.

A wraith learning this art "dedicates" its use to a particular destination, usually Stygia or the Necropolis in which her patrol is based. A player may purchase Return more than once, using a different destination (up to a maximum of three), at 1/3 the experience point cost (round down).

Castigate

••Confession

By use of this art, a wraith may extract information or a confession from another wraith. Unlike most uses of Castigate, which focus on the Shadow, Confession affects a wraith's Willpower, bringing it inexorably under the control of the questioner. This art is an important tool in Hierarchy interrogations, but many Pardoners refuse to teach it, officially condemning it as a perversion of the Arcanos' original intent.

System: Use of Confession requires an extended and resisted roll. The interrogator must roll Charisma + Castigate, while the wraith who is under questioning must roll her

current Willpower. The difficulty in each case is the opponent's permanent Willpower score +1, with a maximum difficulty of 10.

Each success by the interrogator that is not negated by a success from her victim reduces the victim's temporary Willpower by one (thus, over time, an individual's Willpower can be broken). Note that the victim can only resist. Any additional successes she achieves are simply lost. When the victim's temporary Willpower is reduced to one, she will answer truthfully any questions posed to her by her questioner.

A botch by the interrogator at any time during the extended action indicates that she can no longer attempt to reduce her victim's Willpower. She may continue to question the victim normally, but the victim is now free to answer as she chooses. A botch by the victim causes her to "snap," instantly reducing her temporary Willpower to one and causing her to provide the interrogator with complete information or with a full confession (even if the victim is innocent).

Use of this power causes the interrogator to gain 2 temporary points of Angst.

Inhabit

•••• Shadow Weapon

Wraiths who possess the art of Shadow Weapon may temporarily force their Shadow into a hand-held weapon (not a firearm or missile weapon). The presence of the trapped Shadow causes the weapon to inflict extra damage to the wraith's opponent. The wraith must have previously attuned her weapon to accept her Shadow through the use of •••• Inhabit (Gremlinize).

System: The player must roll Wits + Inhabit in order to force the Shadow into the weapon. The difficulty is the Shadow's permanent or temporary Angst score, whichever is higher. The number of successes equals the number of turns during which the Shadow must reside within the weapon. The user must invest Pathos at the time of the roll in order to cause the weapon to inflict aggravated damage. Shadow Weapons cause one die of aggravated damage for each point of Pathos invested in the initial activation roll. (This damage is cumulative with the weapon's standard damage, and can be particularly devastating if the weapon normally causes aggravated wounds.)

This ability may be used in tandem with •Castigate (Coax) to extend the Shadow Weapon's duration by one turn per success. Each use of this power causes the character to gain a temporary Angst point.

••••• Impress

This power allows an Artificer to extract the personality and memories of a wraith and transfer them, intact, into or onto an object — such as the page of a book. This is the form of the Inhabit Arcanos used to create the Living Pages of the

Soulbook of the Legions. It is an extremely potent use of Inhabit and its knowledge is restricted to Stygian Artificers under the direct supervision of the Ruling Council of Deathlords.

System: It is highly unlikely that a player's character will ever have the opportunity to learn this power. A Storyteller-controlled character, however, may have the occasion to attempt its use. Impression of a wraith requires a roll on Intelligence + Impress (difficulty is 6 for a willing subject or 8 for an unwilling victim). The vehicle used to receive the Impression must be attuned to the Artificer through the use of ••••• Inhabit (Claim) and two points of Pathos must be invested in the Impression attempt to make the transfer permanent.

If the victim is unwilling, the Artificer gains a permanent point of Angst.

Lifeweb

••• Early Warning

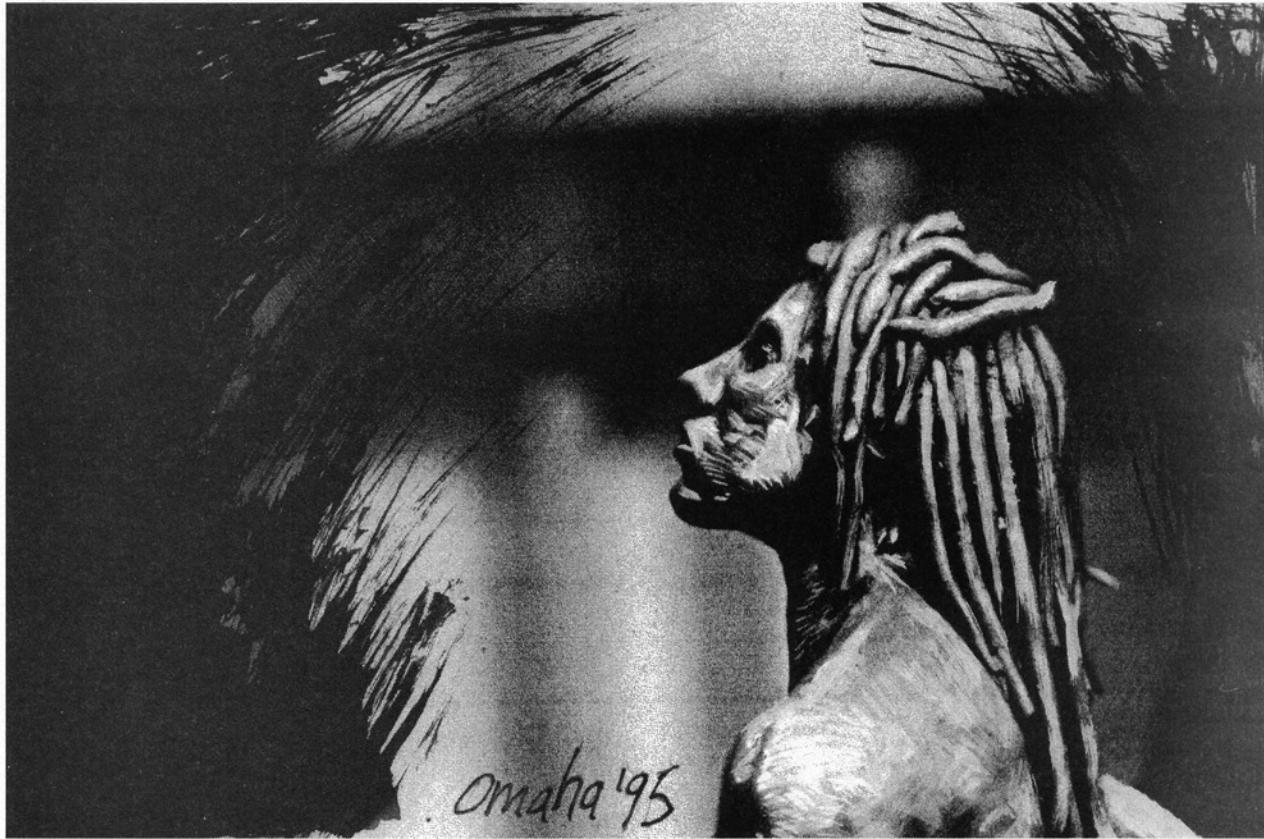
This power is a variant on Splice Strand (••• Lifeweb). Often the Legions compete with one another to acquire significant mortals for their ranks. Early Warning enables a Hierarchy Monitor to target or "tag" these individuals so that the tagger will be warned of the mortal's impending death. Thus alerted, the Monitor may then dispatch a Reaper to collect the soul of the tagged mortal. The affinity established between Monitor and mortal is not strong enough to qualify as a Fetter, but it does allow the Monitor to keep tabs on the individual through the use of Sense Strand (•Lifeweb). A Monitor may keep as many tagged individuals as she has levels in Lifeweb.

System: As in Splice Strand, the wraith must touch the individual in some fashion. Once this is accomplished, the player must roll Manipulation + Lifeweb (difficulty 8) to "tag" the individual. If Sense Strand indicates that the bond between Monitor and target is waning, the wraith may use Early Warning to reestablish the tag (at a difficulty of 6). The duration of the "tag" varies (usually one month per success), and failure to maintain it results in the loss of affinity between wraith and mortal.

Usury

••••• Sustenance

The use of this power is usually reserved for only the most powerful Hierarchy officials, since it allows a wraith to siphon the life energy of predesignated victims from a distance. It is almost certain that all the Deathlords and many powerful Anacreons possess this power, which enables them to outlast most foes in a face-to-face battle. Thralls are the ideal providers of Sustenance, but other wraiths can be assigned the dubious privilege of serving as reservoirs of Corpus for their superiors. Although most practitioners of this art are careful not to overtax their victims' resources, extreme situations (such as the need to defend against multiple attackers) sometimes result in the destruction of the provider. Use of



this power by anyone not authorized by Stygia is grounds for disorporation, and merely knowing it can be dangerous.

System: The wraith must first attune herself to her intended victims, usually by acquiring and assimilating a small portion of the victim's Corpus. This generally requires some level of Moliate, although simple ingestion will also suffice. A channel is thus established between siphoner and victim. To invoke the Sustenance power, the player must roll Manipulation + Usury (difficulty of the victim's Willpower). The number of successes indicates the number of Health or Corpus levels gained at the victim's expense. The user of this power may maintain a number of source individuals equal to her permanent Willpower score.

Each use of this power results in the gaining of a temporary Angst point.

Artifacts



The Hierarchy has a number of special objects, treasures, and tools that qualify as Artifacts. Some of these are quite powerful and will usually be found only in the hands of high-ranking members of the Hierarchy or within the vaults and ar-

chives of Stygia. The Storyteller may find these items useful as atmospheric enhancements or may build a story around discovering, acquiring or retrieving them.

Note that all of the Artifacts listed are without levels. This is because a character may not start out with them as a beginning character. They should be earned through loyal service to the Hierarchy, or, ideally, through good roleplaying. All of the listed Artifacts are extremely rare, and should not be handed out without serious consideration.

Living Page

The only known examples of this artifact reside within the covers of the *Soulbook of the Legions* and its Appendix, the *Imprimatur*. Made from a blend of pulp from the trees found in the swamps of the Underworld and the distilled soulplasm of smelted wraiths, these pages have been impressed with the intact corpus of an individual soul whose memories appear as writing upon the page. As a particular page is "read," the words will continue to scroll upward until the reader turns the page or the memories are exhausted. Note that it is usual for the memories contained in a Living Page to be colored by the beliefs and personality of the person whose soulplasm makes up the Page. The original purpose behind these pages was to preserve the first-hand accounts of significant events in Hierarchy history, but as time passed, the Living Pages

have become convenient ways to remove troublesome individuals without losing the knowledge they possess. (See Chapter Two: History for more information on Living Pages.) The secret of their manufacture is closely guarded by Artificers employed by the Hierarchy in Stygia.

Loyalty Blade

Usually short swords, these weapons date from the period in which Charon made his decision to arm the freewraiths with weapons of Stygian steel. They differ from the Legions' standard issue in that they instill in their wielder a strong sense of loyalty to the Hierarchy. Those who possess a Loyalty Blade cannot use it against a member of the Legions or a Hierarchy official without expending Willpower at the rate of one point per combat turn. Many of these blades have been destroyed over the centuries since their forging, but a number of them still exist. They are sometimes given as rewards to wraiths who serve as bodyguards for important Hierarchs. Like all Stygian darksteel weapons, Loyalty Blades do aggravated damage.

Masks of the Deathlords

The masks which Charon commissioned for his Deathlords are some of the most powerful artifacts native to the Underworld. Although each mask has a number of unique powers that reflect the nature of the Deathlord to which it belongs, all of them share the following qualities:

- **Compel Belief** — Through the combined use of Puppetry and Keening, each Deathlord's mask increases the loyalty of his Legions and allows the Deathlord to give commands that have the force of compulsion behind them. The intent of this power is to ensure the strongest possible defenses against attacks on Stygia. (See the sample Chronicle in Sea of Shadows for additional details on this particular power.)

- **Full-body Moliation** — Each mask transforms the wearer into the physical image of the Deathlord it represents. This power reflects Charon's original desire to emphasize the office over the individual holding that office. In this fashion, a Deathlord could be replaced without anyone noticing such details as a lack of physical stature, a longer stride, or broader hands.

- **Instant Communication** — The masks allow the Deathlords to communicate mentally with one another, contingent upon the agreement of all the parties involved. This ability does not give the Deathlords the power to read each other's thoughts, but it does provide vital channels of communication during attacks on Stygia.

Soulhelm

These "helms" are actually slender circlets of Stygian steel that are meant to be worn around the forehead. The wearer of a Soulhelm is able to make a mental connection with the *Soulbook of the Legions* and may peruse its contents as if she were present in the Great Library of Stygia. Only nine of these artifacts are known to have been made: one for Charon, one for each of the Deathlords. Although they are carefully guarded by their owners, it is rumored that one of the Soulhelms has disappeared — stolen during the Renegade attack upon the Onyx Tower in the 1500s. (See Chapter One for further information on the nature, construction, and use of the Soulhelms.)

Archetypes



The following Archetypes may be chosen by players of Hierarchy characters with the permission of the Storyteller. They may also be appropriate for other types of characters.

Psyche Archetypes

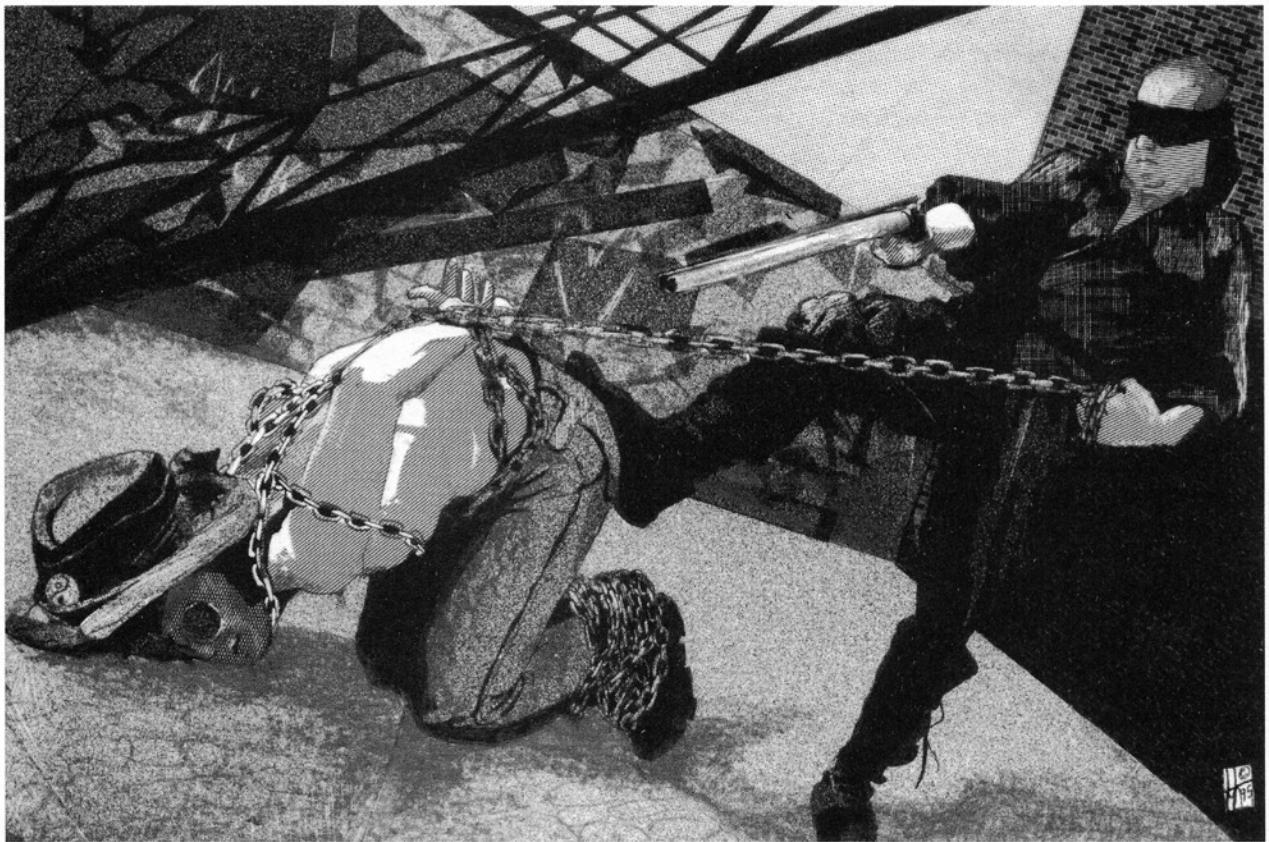
Analyst

You have an overwhelming urge to understand the motivations behind any given course of action. You search constantly for hidden meanings in the words of those you meet. People never act without ulterior motives, and you are uncomfortable unless you understand what those motives are. You know full well the reasons for why you act as you do, and you need to extend your understanding to encompass the actions of others as well.

— Regain Willpower whenever you successfully ferret out the real purpose behind a supposedly straightforward situation or gain true insight into what someone is really saying.

Explorer

They say curiosity killed the cat, but you are already dead, so you have nothing to lose. Anything new, strange or unfamiliar excites you. Although you are not without caution, you rarely hesitate to go somewhere you have never gone or do something you have never done. This sometimes gets you into trouble with more conservative people, but just as often you are rewarded for your bravery and initiative.



— Regain Willpower whenever you make a significant discovery, lead the way into unknown territory, or experience something for the first time.

Pragmatist

Only fools believe in the absolutes of good and evil or right and wrong. Expediency and feasibility are two of your favorite words. You always take the most reasonable and practical route to accomplish your goals. In most cases, this means cooperating with the powers-that-be, but occasionally you find a disparity between what is legal and what is possible. For you not only does the end justify the means, but the means must be the most practical way to achieve the end.

— Regain Willpower when you are able to carry out your goals in a practical, efficient manner regardless of the methods you employ.

Shadow Archetypes

The following Shadow Archetypes are designed to get you thinking about new directions in which to take the Shadow. The Storyteller should consider carefully the effects of introducing any new Archetype into the game, and should come up with Harrowings appropriate not only to the Shadow, but to the Psyche as well. See *The Sea of Shadows* for more information on running Harrowings.

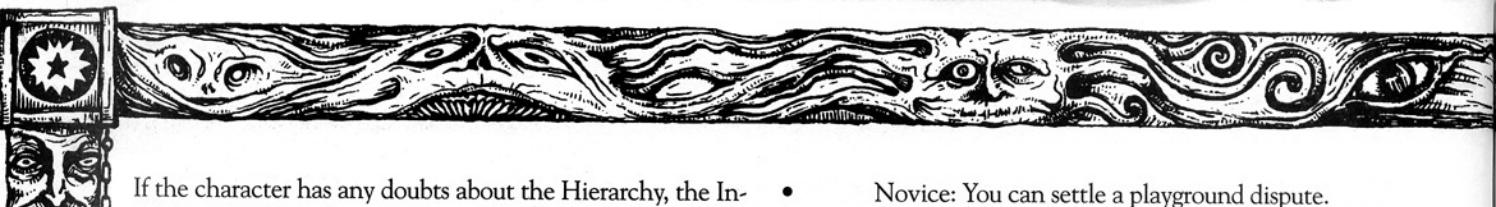
Anarchist

This Shadow delights in fomenting rebellion. He is the consummate rebel, always ready to buck the system just to see how much chaos will result. Rules exist to be broken, authority to be defied, and orders to be disobeyed. The Anarchist delights in confounding existing situations, forcing unpredictable behavior, and ruining carefully wrought plans. Inciting rebellion and mutiny, sabotaging vital operations, and promoting confusion are just a few of the tricks up his sleeve.

When the Anarchist is in control, he attempts to destroy any existing order within a group by causing the greatest amount of confusion possible. This Shadow will refuse to obey orders and will attempt to get others to do the same. Random acts of violence and vandalism are not beyond his means. He can call up repressed feelings of resentment against superiors and leaders and can awaken the latent violence within its Psyche.

Inquisitor

The Inquisitor constantly attempts to ferret out the character's darkest secrets, using trickery, coercion, and threats to force confessions (particularly public ones) of hidden crimes, traitorous or disloyal thoughts, and humiliating deeds.



If the character has any doubts about the Hierarchy, the Inquisitor will bring those doubts to light and put them on display for the world to see. She is ruthless in her methods and implacable in her determination to prove that the character is "guilty" of something — especially if that something will shock and outrage others.

When dominant, the Inquisitor will bring others under her scrutiny as well. Her assumption is that everyone is a traitor, Heretic, secret Renegade, or saboteur. She will even go so far as to accuse prominent Hierarchy officials of disloyalty if given the opportunity.

Torturer

The Torturer is a devotee of the art of inflicting pain. He possesses strong sadistic impulses and enjoys seeing others suffer from his repertoire of torments. He prefers using the character as a vehicle for hurting others, but will resort to self-torture in a pinch. This is a very dangerous Shadow to have because his actions often result in real damage to the Corpus of his victims. Often the Torturer will offer some excuse for his behavior — such as acquiring information from a prisoner or replenishing Pathos from a thrall or even a member of the character's Cohort — but sometimes he will admit to hurting someone just for the fun of causing pain.

When in control, the Torturer will attempt to live up to his name in any way possible, from verbally abusing others to inflicting actual physical harm. Often this Shadow comes equipped with a Tainted Relic associated with the art of torture (a cat-o-nine-tails, a medieval thumbscrew, or some similar object).

New Abilities

Skills

Negotiation

This skill enables a Hierarchy wraith to successfully defuse potentially hostile or troublesome situations. In any crowd there is always someone who possesses the insights and verbal skills necessary to bring opposing sides together. Characters with good Negotiation skills are important in preventing fights, arranging truces between warring factions, and bargaining for the release of hostages or captives.

- Novice: You can settle a playground dispute.
- Practiced: You have enough insight to keep the peace among your friends.
- Competent: People bring their problems to you to solve.
- Expert: You could make a fortune as a marriage counselor.
- Master: You could solve the Irish problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict with a few choice words.

Possessed by: Civil Administrators, Crisis Counselors, Diplomats, Hierarchy Recruiters, Necropolis Officials, Union Organizers

Specialties: Civil Disputes, Hostage Situations, Interpersonal Conflicts, Territorial Disputes, Wars

Networking

The ability to maintain a roster of contacts and allies is only as good as the knowledge of when to make use of them. Characters with Networking skills are able to rely on the expertise of others in order to gain necessary information. Unlike the Backgrounds Contacts or Allies, this ability consists of being able to bring together people who have need of each other. Networking is the knack of knowing someone who knows someone who knows someone who...

Wraiths who possess good Computer skills may roll Intelligence + Networking when on-line to make contacts via the information superhighway.

- Novice: your network consists of people living in the same city or Necropolis.
- Practiced: you are part of a regional network of professional and social contacts.
- Competent: your network extends nationwide and crosses professional boundaries.
- Expert: political boundaries do not exist as far as your contacts extend.
- Master: your connections include creatures such as vampires, werewolves, mages, changelings and the odd mummy or two.

Possessed by: Anacrons, Electronic Bulletin Board Users, Hierarchy Ladder Climbers, Politicians, Private Investigators, Social Organizers

Specialties: Esoteric Specialists, Hierarchy Contacts, Internet, Legal Contacts, Professional Contacts, Research Connections

Knowledges

Military Tactics

You have studied (or perhaps have been part of) some of the military campaigns of mortal history and have a good grasp of the strategies and tactics involved in waging war. You know how best to deploy units on a grand scale and how to take a small unit into the Tempest in search of Spectres. You can spot the weakness of an enemy and exploit it to the fullest. You know how to conduct siege warfare, blitzkrieg maneuvers, extended military campaigns and search-and-destroy missions. You are able to take command of a hostile area and restore order among the "natives." This knowledge covers both planning a military action and making decisions in the heat of battle.

- Student: West Point graduate
- College: Platoon leader
- Masters: General
- Doctorate: Erwin Rommel
- Scholar: Alexander the Great

Possessed by: Citadel Overlords, Equites, Former Soldiers, Military Historians, Wargamers

Specialties: Ground Battles, Long-range Campaigns, Mounted Warfare, Occupation Forces, Siege Warfare, Small Unit Tactics

Hierarchy-Based Adventures



ot all Hierarchy adventures will be "missions" assigned by the characters' superiors, but many are. After all, unlike most Renegades and Heretics, Hierarchy do have a job to do, and are responsible for protecting the law-abiding citizens of Stygia and the Shadowlands. Any ongoing Hierarchy chronicle should provide a good mix of assigned missions and more character-driven adventures. Remember that Hierarchy characters are not just cogs in the machine; they have goals, fears and hopes of their own.

• Treasure Hunt

A rumor surfaces pinpointing the location of a Soulhelm reported to have been stolen during the notorious Renegade attack on the Onyx Tower. The characters belong to an elite Hierarchy patrol assigned to track down the rumor and — with luck — acquire the missing artifact.

• Escort Duty

An important Heretic or Renegade has been captured in the Shadowlands. The characters are chosen to act as escorts to ensure the prisoner's safe arrival in Stygia for trial. Along the way, allies of the captive may ambush the patrol in an attempt to rescue her, attacks by Spectres may result in the prisoner's escape (thus entailing pursuit through the Tempest or in an unfamiliar Necropolis), or the prisoner herself may attempt to win the characters over to her cause.

• Tangled Webs

As members of one of the Legions stationed in Stygia itself, the characters become involved in the latest scheme concocted by their Legion's Deathlord against his current rival. This story requires Hierarchy wraiths to engage in sabotage and other covert activities and necessitates the use of a great deal of subtlety to avoid getting themselves caught — and having their actions disavowed by their superiors.

• The Best Defense

It has been discovered that a group of Spectres is causing trouble in the Skinlands. A select group of Hierarchy loyalists (the characters) receives orders to traverse the Shroud and eliminate them, thus simultaneously enforcing and breaching the Code of Charon.

• Time Bomb

The characters, a group of Hierarchy loyalists, learn a piece of damaging information about a Deathlord or one of the Hierarchy's darker secrets. This could be the truth about the reprogramming camps, news of one Deathlord's deadly plot against, or anything inbetween. They must decide what to do with this information and who to take it to. A clock running down to the information's fruition only adds to the tension. This can lead to some very tough choices by the characters if one's faith has been shaken by the revelation or the Deathlord in question is not well liked.

• Loose Lips Sink Ships

Members of a Deathlord's household (the characters) overhear sensitive information about their house being talked about in the Agora. Only a member of the household could know such things, but who would drop it in the Agora? More importantly, why? As the most trusted members of the household, they are asked to find the dangerous gossip. The blabbermouth could be anyone, and the characters must step very lightly in this dangerous hunt.

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THE HIERARCHY

The Empire of the Dead...

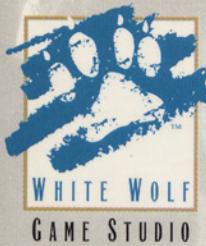
The system. The establishment. The powers that be. Management. Since its inception, the Hierarchy has fostered an image of strength and invulnerability, power and omniscience. These are the masks through which the Hierarchy looks out upon the Underworld. These are the mirrors that reflect the faces of those who stand on the outside, looking in.

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